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AN

ETHICAL TREATISE

ON THE

PASSIONS AND AFFECTIONS

OF THE

MIND.

PART II.

On Conduct conducive to Well-being and Happiness.

VOL. III.

A

TREATISE

ON THE

PASSIONS AND AFFECTIONS

OF THE

MIND,

Philosophical, Ethical, and Theological.

IN A SERIES OF

DISQUISITIONS,

IN WHICH ARE TRACED,

THE MORAL HISTORY OF MAN,

IN HIS

PURSUITS, POWERS, AND MOTIVES OF ACTION,

AND

THE MEANS OF OBTAINING

Permanent Well-Being and Happiness.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

By T. COGAN, M. D.

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AN

ETHICAL TREATISE

ON THE

PASSIONS,

FOUNDED ON THE PRINCIPLES INVESTIGATED IN A PHILOSOPHICAL TREATISE

BY T. COGAN, M. D.

Nulla enim vitæ pars, neque publicis neque privatis, neque forensibus neque domesticis, in rebus, neque si tecum agas quid, neque si cum altero contrahas, vacare officio potest; in eoque colendo sita vitæ est honestas omnis, & in negligendo, turpitudo.—CIC. DE OFFICIIS.

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AN

ETHICAL TREATISE, &c.

PART II.

On Conduct conducive to Happiness.

IN TWO DISQUISITIONS.

I. On the influence of virtue upon personal and social happiness.

II. On Morality; its nature, laws, and motives.

10258

CONTENTS.

Page.

Introduction - - - - - - - - - - - - 1

DISQUISITION I.

ON VIRTUOUS CONDUCT AS PRODUCTIVE OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING - - - - 29

CHAP. I.

On the Virtue of Prudence. - - 33

Contentment - - - - - - - - - - - - 39
Fortitude - - - - - - - - - - - - - 43
Patience - - - - - - - - - - - - - 46
Modesty - - - - - - - - - - - - - 49

Humility - - - - - - - - - - - - 51
Industry - - - - - - - - - - - - 54
Frugality - - - - - - - - - - - - 56
Temperance - - - - - - - - - - - 58
Chastity - - - - - - - - - - - - 59
Moderation - - - - - - - - - - - 60

CHAP. II.

On the Social Virtues. - - - 68

Justice - - - - - - - - - - - - 69
Benevolence - - - - - - - - - - - 79

DISQUISITION. II.

ON THE NATURE OF MORALITY; ITS LAWS, MOTIVES, &c. - - - - - - - - - - - 93

CHAP. I.

Origin of opinions respecting Virtue Morals &c.

Sect. I. On the import of the terms Virtue and Vice - - - - - - - - - 97
II. On approbation and disapprobation 108
III. On merit, and demerit - - - - 120

CHAP. II.

On the Laws of Moral Obligation.

Sect. I. Difference between virtue and morality - - - - - - - - - - 127
Sect. II. On Moral Sanctions; or the inducements to practise virtue - - 141
1. Self interest - - - - - - 145
2. Rational conduct - - - 147
3. The social principle - - - 149
4. The benevolent principle - 154
5. The beauty of virtue - - 159
6. Positive injunctions - - - 164
Sect. III. Comparative view of the motives enumerated, respecting their degrees of influence - - 177—198
Sect. IV. On the religious principles most conducive to virtue - - - 204

CHAP. III.

On the origin and progress of virtuous and religious affections. - - - - - - - - 231

Fear - - - - - - - - - - - - 233

Hope - - - - - - - - - - - 235
Love - - - - - - - - - - - 238
Sorrow - - - - - - - - - - 254

INTRODUCTION.

IN the preceding disquisitions our attention has been directed to human nature, as engaged in the pursuit of Good; and we contemplated the uses of the passions and affections, as connected with this grand object: We stated the pernicious aberrations to which they are exposed, with the causes of these aberrations: We analysed those various intellectual powers, whose office it is to instruct and guide us in the important inquiry after Well-being: We investigated also the nature and extent of that Good, which human Beings are capable of enjoying, and of which some portion or other is the object of incessant desire.

The terms *Good,* for the *object* of our desire, and *Well-being,* to express the desirable state, have been adopted in preference to any others, because they appear to be the most appropriate. The first denotes the apparent character of the

object pursued, and the last comprehends ease, pleasure, felicity. When Epicurus maintained that the whole of man consists in the enjoyment of pleasure, it was originally understood, that he intended to express the enjoyment of all Good; but the prominent idea presented to the mind being that of *sensual* pleasure, disreputable associations have been connected with the term, and the greatest Sensualists are now placed in the foremost rank of his genuine disciples. As we possess, or occasionally enjoy, much good which is not entitled to the character of *happiness* or of *felicity*, neither of these terms can be deemed generic; for they do not apply to all our pleasurable sensations or states, which are in themselves desirable; that great blessing *Contentment*, would, for example be excluded. *Well-being* comprehends the whole. It is not improper when applied to the innocent gratifications of Sense; it admits of occasional pleasures, derived from amusements and incidental exhilarations of the animal spirits; it is peculiarly adapted to that composed and habitual state, in which we acknowledge existence to be a valuable blessing; it embraces the pleasures and satisfactions derived from the love of knowledge; and it reaches to those more exalted sensations which constitute the highest state of well-being, *Felicity*.

Hitherto we have chiefly considered man, as an *interested* being, perpetually eager in his search after some apparent Good; and our attention has been directed to his desires, and his capacities relative to this object. According to the plan proposed we are now to make the *Conduct* and *Dispositions* of rational agents, and whatever may respect these, the chief subjects of our inquiry. We shall attempt to trace the line of conduct which it is necessary to pursue, the dispositions it is necessary to cultivate, and the particular inducements by which moral agents ought invariably to be influenced, in their search after those portions of Good, which from the constitution of their nature, and the situation in which they are placed, they are rendered capable of attaining.

But before we enter fully into the subject, we shall make some preliminary observations, as introductory to our plan. These will principally be deduced from the investigations which have already been made, and they will constitute the basis of our subsequent disquisitions.

I. By *Conduct* we understand an effort to possess some particular object, or to apply certain means in order to obtain certain ends; and by *right* Conduct, we express such exertions as have the

approbation of our reason respecting the object, the motive, and the means. The object must be important or interesting; the motives pure and respectable; the means lawful and properly adapted to the purpose. Whatever is contrary to reason cannot lead to permanent Good; if the motive be dishonest or dishonorable, the agent acts upon a principle by which he stands self-condemned; and ignorance of the proper means cannot ensure a salutary issue. It was to prevent wrong action and its train of pernicious consequences, that human nature is endowed with those intellectual powers which have the acquisition of truth for their object; and with those cautionary powers of doubt, hesitation, and deliberation, which detain the mind from acting, until clearer evidence shall indicate the right path.

It is observable that the word *Conduct*, is most pertinently, if not exclusively, applied to the actions of beings who are endowed with reason and understanding. It is not usual to speak of the conduct of Animals governed entirely by instinct: Of these we say that "they acted in a particular manner," not that they *conducted* themselves in that manner. This distinction seems to be founded upon the discretionary power with which rational Beings are entrusted, in union with the immense diversity of objects upon which this

power is exercised. Altho' the Instincts of Animals be as diversified as their various species, yet in most of their pursuits they act *instinctively*; that is, by invariable propensities, or by an uncontrouled impulse of the senses, and of the passions immediately excited by them. Notwithstanding the diversities correspondent to the specific nature of Animals, they are all influenced by three objects alone, in their search after Good to themselves; the procuring of sustenance; the escaping from danger; and the propagation of their species. As different animals are destined to such different kinds of Good, and to escape from various kinds of danger, there is a correspondent diversity both in their conformation and instincts; but these diversities still relate to the above objects. In these respects the Whale does not differ from the Oyster, the Reptile from the Elephant, nor the Tyger from the Lamb. In the human species, these desires, are by common consent, placed in the lowest class. It is expected that the superior faculties of men, be employed about objects, that are deemed more exalted and refined:—There is a much larger range for human conduct:—Our pursuits are still more diversified:—Our conduct is more the result of a preference, and this preference is expected to be the result of some mental

exertion. Hence we are not only endowed with the simple powers of perception, but of reflection, deliberation, discrimination, to a great extent; and of finally determining according to the dictates of sound reason.

In all sensitive Beings, the grand desire is one and the same, to possess something Good. But in Animals of an inferior nature, this desire directs to a very few objects as the means of good; these are productive of few gratifications, and the passions excited by these desires or the incidents attending them, are also comparatively few. Animals are alone affected by things administering to their sensual wants. The desire of immediate gratification, anger at impediments, fear at some impending danger, instinctive fondness for their offspring during the early months of their existence, a silent attachment to their own species, appear to be, with some few exceptions, the total of their propensities. The sources of Good to the human species being more copious and diversified, Man being endowed with the more extensive powers of observation, comprehension, and reflection, he is subject to numerous correspondent passions and affections. He not only feels the emotions which present objects are capable of exciting, but upon reflection he can rejoice or grieve at the past; by his foresight he can hope or

fear for the future. He has a quick sense of honour or of disgrace from moral causes. He can suffer remorse where he has acted morally wrong, or be rewarded with complacency from the consciousness of his having acted right. As the superior sociability of his nature opens to him extensive sources of good or of evil, so is he exposed to all the contingent passions and affections, which the peculiarities of his connections are calculated to excite. As the passions of men are not under the irresistible impulse of Instinct, nor always under the guidance of reason, they are frequently productive of consequences to which the inferior creation are strangers.

II. If we attend to the various sources of Good to be enjoyed by man, we shall discover four distinctions and gradations. The indulgence of the animal appetites; pleasures and amusements, or slighter mental gratifications, including the enjoyment derived from the conveniences and accommodations of life; intellectual pursuits; and the cultivation of social, relative and pious affections. The gratifications of animal appetites proceed from a natural impulse, and demand neither observation, experience, nor reason to prompt to an indulgence. This is the only propensity possessed by man, in common with the brute creation;

and, in the human species, it is observed to be the most ungovernable in the most ignorant and uncultivated minds; which being strangers to every superior enjoyment, cannot be affected by any comparisons. In the pursuit of amusements, conveniences and accommodations, the mind becomes more operative; the imagination is peculiarly active, inventing or modifying things pleasant and useful, and creating fantastic scenes which may either amuse or deceive. In the pursuits of knowledge, the exercise of memory, ratiocination and judgement are the most conspicuous. By the first, facts are collected and retained; by the second inferences are drawn; by the last a decision is made. Thus we perceive that our minds are not only enriched by interesting facts, but also by the deduction of other important truths from them. In the pleasure derived from the sociability of our nature, and from our connections with other beings, the *affections of the Heart* are immediately concerned. It is here that the passions and affections generally manifest themselves in the strongest manner, and they are deemed the constituents of the most refined felicity.

III. It has been noticed that every voluntary action of a rational Agent, proceeds from the final determination of his own mind; that this mind

has been influenced by certain inducements, having some apparent good for their immediate exciting cause; and that unless the inclinations or desires thus generated be restrained by more powerful inducements, those first excited will become the efficient moving cause, of the determination of the Will; and thus will they acquire the character of *Motives*. It has also been remarked that inducements have a stronger influence when they are conformable to the principle, which has taken habitual possession of the mind, whatever be its character and tendency. It was further observed, and it can scarcely be observed too often, that the final execution of every determination of the Will, produces an immutable change respecting the grand pursuit of Well-being. The deed performed brings us forwards in a greater or less degree, towards the enjoyment of this Well-being, or places us at a more remote distance from it; and we are compelled to submit to all the consequences.

These interesting facts prove that the principles of human action, may be distinguished into two Classes, *primary* and *subordinate*. The primary, grand, universal principle, ever operative in all sensitive and conscious beings, is the love and desire of some species of Good. The subordinate principles relate to the apparent means of obtaining this Good; and they direct to particular

actions, according to the idea entertained at the instant, of the efficacy of the means to produce the particular species of good desired. These subordinate principles are frequently very different in different persons. Some, for example, are actuated by a principle of benevolence, of justice, of integrity; others, by a principle of honour; others by a principle of ambition, of revenge, of sensuality, &c. Nor is the same principle uniformly active in the same person, at all times. He frequently sees the same object in different points of view. He is himself subjected by adventitious circumstances, to a versatility of mind, which may, for a period, occasion such a contrariety in his dispositions, that his predilections and aversions shall entirely change their objects; and the actions of one moment shall be opposite to the plans of the preceding. However, notwithstanding these contrarieties, he is still in the pursuit of Good; and it still remains a truth, that the prevalent influence of certain principles, constitutes the habitual character of each individual.

IV. The history which was given, upon a former occasion, of the sources of our good and evil, of the happiness we are rendered capable of enjoying, and the misery to which we are exposed, manifests that the state of well-being, in the hu-

man species, depends principally upon the *feelings of the Mind.* Corporeal indulgences are not only transient, but they are comparatively few. The most numerous, as well as the most exalted and durable pleasures are *mental.* The delicate enjoyments derived from the cultivation of the arts, distinguished by the appellation of Taste, though they acknowledge the organs of sense to partake of the gratification, as they are the introductory media, yet they are deservedly considered as the pleasures of the *Mind.* The slighter amusements which recreate the frame; the pursuit of knowledge; the calm pleasures of contentment, satisfaction, complacency; the invigorations of hope and joy; the delightful affection of love, in all its ramifications; all the social and relative affections, whether conjugal, parental, filial, or friendly; as also esteem, veneration, gratitude, admiration; and the expansive pleasures of benevolence, are all of them *mental.* Most of our *painful* sensations have also a similar character. The pangs of hatred, with all its modifications; the irritations of anger, envy, and peevish discontent; the corrosions of malice; the oppressions of sorrow, grief, and melancholy; the horrors of fear, despair, and remorse; and the various ramifications of displacency, are passions and affections of the *Mind.*

These obvious facts show the high importance of regulating the passions and affections of the mind, and possessing that habitual frame of disposition, which is favourable to all those pleasing impressions of which it is susceptible, and which place it at the most remote distance from mental misery. The pleasures of sense, when most innocent, are still of a very transient nature. They are only to be enjoyed periodically; and if we possess no other resources, the mind sinks into a dull vacuity, into a listless inactive stupor, during the intermediate space. Nor can we conceive it to be engaged in any other occupation, than in seeking fresh occasions to stimulate new desires, that the transient pleasure of gratification may again be enjoyed. If these gratifications be illegitimate, such as reason condemns, such as expose to mischievous consequences, this intermediate space is filled up with fearful apprehensions, with contrition, remorse, and self condemnation, as often as the mind is compelled to reflect; and it is only aroused from a state of stupor, by a sense of the keenest misery.

Hence the necessity of that mental Discipline, which Moralists in every age have judged to be so essential to human happiness; and by which alone every disorderly, tormenting and injurious passion and affection may be subdued, and those

affections be cherished, which implant peace, contentment, satisfaction within, and diffuse their beneficial effects all around.

V. Mental discipline, implies, that we possess an accurate discernment of that which is most productive of permanent Well-being, to ourselves and others; habitual dispositions to act in a correspondent manner; and firmness of mind to resist every seductive inducement of a contrary tendency. By the former we escape the evils, from which minds, the best disposed, could not otherways be secure; by the others we resist the dangerous impressions made upon us by sensible objects, and subdue that inordinate self-love, which is inconsistent with personal happiness, and so fatal to the happiness of others. It is the regulation of our propensities, and the cultivation of right dispositions, that can alone ensure a permanency in right conduct, or render the practice of that which our reason most approves, a source of permanent pleasure to the agent. Abstract ideas of what is right and proper, are not sufficient to secure happiness. A theoretical conviction of the beneficial tendency of some actions, and the pernicious consequences of others, will not be an effectual counterpoise to the strong impulse of desire, and the impetuosity of those disorderly

passions, which may be excited by improper objects; nor will they reclaim the Base and Sordid from the disgraceful influence of inordinate Self-love. The proper office of examination, inquiry, and ratiocination, is, strictly speaking, confined to the production of a just discernment, and an accurate discrimination. But when these are obtained, we may still view the most important truths in the light of abstract facts, or of propositions in which we take no pleasure, nor seem to possess any interest. It is by *feeling* their importance, that a predilection is formed. When proper Desires are excited, rational inducements operate as they ought; and these will rise into Motives, if they be not effectually opposed by other inducements and desires of a contrary tendency. The gratification of every desire is, at the instant, pleasing, though the issue should prove fatal. It is therefore of the first importance that our desires should uniformly lead to that which is productive of Good, without any admixture of evil. It is alone by the permanent influence of *right affections,* that an uniformity can be expected; because these alone will be permanently operative. In cases of high importance, the first impulse of conviction will sometimes excite a strong desire for correspondent action. But the *Passions* are always transient. Their immediate stimulus may

have a sufficient force to impel the mind from its usual track, for a short period, but it will not induce a constant and steady pace in the new path. When the passion subsides, the strong efforts will also subside. Unless it be succeeded by its correspondent *affections*, former habits will regain the ascendency. The permanency of right affections is necessary, to introduce right habits, and right habits are synonymous with confirmation in goodness. Were any one to do that which is in itself right with reluctance and permanent self-denial, he might benefit others, and he might avert some great and impending evil from himself, but he could not be in a state of self-enjoyment. The discharge of his duty would be felt as an irksome task. *Compulsive* acts of justice belong to slaves, and not to free men; and compulsive generosity, compassion, and benevolence, are contradictions in terms.

VI. In order to ensure right conduct, those considerations or inducements must be prevalent, which are deservedly considered as a proper counterpoise, to the propensities of a contrary character. For the strongest inducement will become the Motive of every particular action; and where there are various inducements of a contrary tendency, each of them possessing a certain degree

of power, there must be a peculiar energy in the prevalent inducement to enable it to gain this ascendency. Such inducements must therefore appear peculiarly important, in order to produce the desired effect. They must promise a superior good to some one, or be considered as a desirable compensation for what may be deemed a present disadvantage, or may threaten a future loss.

Another requisite, is a persuasion of the *Truth* of counteracting principles; that they are not altogether conjectural, or merely possible. As whatever immediately and strongly affects the mind through the medium of the senses, conveys at that instant, the idea of a *certainty*; so whatever is expected to counteract, must be founded upon such a degree of evidence as to entitle it to our firm belief. It is true that, in some cases, the mere possibility of very important issues, may invigorate to right conduct, or terrify from that which is wrong; but, generally speaking, without a conviction of the *reality* of some future good or evil, the influence of present and sensible objects will prevail.

In our inquiry into the irregularities of the passions and affections; their nature and causes, * we endeavoured to prove, that those errors in conduct which are not the effects of absolute ignorance,

* See Part 1. Disq: 1. Ch. 11.

proceed either from the influence of present objects, by which certain desires are immediately excited; or from a predominant *Self-love*, which makes personal gratification, and personal accommodation, the centre of every desire, and the source of every motive. These effects are produced without any studied operation of the mind. The mind appears at the first instant, to be more passive than active. An impulse is received to which it submits, without reserve or restraint. We are always impressed by the prominent qualities of objects, which are supposed to respect our Well-being. It is these which strike, excite desires, and incline to act. Unless other qualities of a different nature, or from other objects, be in readiness to oppose them, the first will inevitably prevail. But as these qualities, or these different objects, are not present to our view, they must be brought forward by an immediate effort of the mind. Some other inducement possessing the requisite powers, must be made to operate. A just sense of that which is right and proper to be done, a due attention to the beneficial, or injurious consequences, which may follow the compliance with, or a resistance to the seducing incitement, must be made to gain the ascendency over the illicit propensity. The first

supposes that the mind has been so well disciplined to the love of what is right, that it had rather forego the proffered advantage, than sacrifice its integrity; and the other supposes that we have, either from experience or observation, acquired such an extensive knowledge of consequences, attendant upon certain actions, as to be able to represent to ourselves these consequences, under the character of important realities; until their intrinsic importance, although they are not directly operative, shall subdue the alluring influence of present objects. It is to answer these desirable purposes, that we are endowed with the powers of observation, investigation, reflection, contemplation, meditation, &c By observation, reflection, and investigation, we acquire a knowledge respecting the nature of human actions, and their various issues. By contemplation, we become more deeply impressed with the excellence and importance of the objects which ought to be most influential; and by meditation, we devise the most powerful means of accomplishing the desirable end. Thus the mind may become habituated to a class of operative principles, calculated to resist the impulse of passion, or of inordinate desires, and ensure a victory.

In this contest the Imagination may also become a potent ally. It is by the Imagination that we

are so frequently deceived. It is by its delusion, that we are so often induced to expect happiness from conduct which reason condemns. But when this faculty paints in strong and lively colours, the whole train of good or bad consequences, inevitably resulting from particular modes of conduct; when it particularizes the Good that will arrive, and in which we shall certainly rejoice; or describes, in all their horrors, the Evils from which the season of escape is irrecoverably past, by a commission of the deed, the imagination annihilates the distance of time, and sets our future selves as it were immediately before us. It brings forward, and places before the eye of the mind, what we shall hereafter be in character, station, and feeling, in consequence of a compliance, or of a resistance, to the inducements of the moment.

VII. The contest of opposite inducements is at length terminated by the *Resolution* which the mind forms, previously to the irrecoverable act; and the *Inducement* is now rendered triumphant, by being converted into a *Motive*. When a conviction is implanted of the importance, or propriety of any particular line of conduct, Resolution may be considered as the medium, between this conviction, and the good to be derived from the

act itself. It may be formed with great reluctance, arising from the apprehensions of pain, from being obliged to counteract a strong propensity, or to militate against long and favorite habits. But it is the commencement of a combat, which insures a victory. The first instance of success is a triumph inspiring joy, which invigorates and strengthens subsequent resolutions. The mind now becomes better acquainted with the nature and value of those considerations, which it had called to its assistance. It examines every quality in all its relations, aud to the extent of its influence. It approves and admires as it contemplates. Disinclinations and disgusts are gradually subdued; dispositions are formed novel and pleasing. The new inclination grows stronger by indulgence; a new train of correspondent ideas excite to actions congenial with their nature; and the heart gradually acquires a love for that virtue, which reason has always recommended. A delightful harmony now subsists between two powers which were before at variance, to the perplexity of the mind; and by their union, they subdue every impediment to a speedy progress towards permanent felicity.

VIII. As the human species alone is rendered capable of extensive knowledge, and progressive

improvement, to an unlimited degree, it is a truth demanding our closest attention, that both the *necessity* and the *difficulty* of mental discipline, increase with the progressive enlargement of our ideas, and the extent of our acquaintance with the multitudinous objects surrounding us. Every object exciting desires, seems to possess beneficial qualities. These are noticed with a degree of eagerness, and we wish to appropriate them. The more numerous the objects are, and the greater the diversity observed in their qualities, the more numerous may be the passions and desires excited, and the difficulty of making a wise and prudent choice, may proportionably increase. Some of these objects relate to immediate, others to more distant advantages; some strongly attract by the allurements of immediate gratifications, others promise a greater, but a more remote good. Hence are contrarieties in our desires augmented, by the amplitude and diversity of striking qualities which progressive knowledge places before us. The minds that are the best disciplined will make the wisest choice; those most destitute of mental culture, will be in danger of the most pernicious mistakes. They whose principles and propensities are not in proper unison, will be exposed to self deception, by having recourse to

every sophistry, in order to reconcile things which are incompatible. Thus it is, that an extensive acquaintance with surrounding objects, may expose us to the pangs of disappointment, by perpetually deceiving our expectations; or may become the occasion of extreme wretchedness, by stirring up disorderly passions. Without just discrimination, without some rational principles, together with dispositions and resolutions to make them the rule of conduct, our enlarged acquaintance with various subjects may become the occasion of misery; it may dispose us to bewail those intellectual improvements, which have inspired a keen sensation of our wants, by augmenting our acquaintance with the things to be enjoyed.

IX. We have remarked, upon a former occasion, that, although some actions and propensities may be deemed perfectly indifferent, or optional, by mankind in general; yet others are considered in a very different point of view. Some are denominated *Virtues*, and others are regarded as *Vices*; and these terms are marks of approbation or of reproach. The distinctions have universally existed, although a difference in opinion has frequently arisen, under which of the classes, particular actions should be ranged. The general rule has been to place those actions and dispositions which

have a known, or supposed tendency to produce some specific good upon the agent, or upon his associates, or others with whom he is connected in the bonds of amity, in the class of *Virtues*; and the intentional production of evil, in the class of *Vices*; and to ascribe different degrees of merit or of demerit, to such actions and dispositions, according to contingent circumstances. To these are annexed ideas of obligation to perform, or to abstain; and these ideas are founded upon certain *Laws of Conduct,* which ought to be invariably observed. Right conduct therefore implies a perfect conformity in the agent to these rules, and wrong conduct implies a violation of them.

The above epitome of the leading principles relative to human conduct, and which are peculiar to rational and intelligent agents, opens to us a large field for investigation, respecting the nature and influence of human actions, as they relate to Well-being, or the production of happiness or of misery; the principles which ought to be the rules of action; and the motives by which it is expected that intelligent and social beings should be uniformly governed. These subjects shall occupy our attention in the following disquisitions.

In the first of which, enquiry shall be made

into the nature of that conduct which is most conducive to personal and social happiness, or the reverse; and the manner in which their opposite effects are produced.

In the second, We will endeavour to trace the origin of our ideas of Virtue and Morality; examine upon what moral obligation is founded, and the comparative influence of its laws upon the human mind, in the practice of virtue.

In some subsequent disquisitions, we shall particularly consider the authority by which those religious principles are enforced, which are best calculated to promote the uniform practice of virtue.

Although no Science can be of a more practical nature than the Science of Morals, yet the extreme copiousness of the subject, compels the author to confine his plan to the investigation of the principles on which all practice is founded. The attentive reader will draw many practical inferences as he proceeds, in addition to those which have naturally presented themselves in the course of our inquiries. But as Virtue and Morality extend to every state and every action of moral agents, both as individuals, and in their relative and social characters, to collect and arrange the moral pre-

cepts deducible from the principles advanced into a regular system, would be an undertaking too extensive for the limits he has prescribed to himself. His grand object is to point out the harmonious connections that subsist, between the well directed passions and affections of the mind, moral conduct, rational religion, and human happiness; to ascertain in what Virtue specifically consists; to examine the nature of moral Obligation, and appreciate the various Inducements which Moralists, and Divines propose, in all their attempts to awaken mankind to a sense of their duty, and their interests; and to them he must leave the amplification or more immediate application, in the various duties and offices of life.

DISQUISITION

THE FIRST.

On the Nature of that Conduct which is most conducive

TO

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HAPPINESS,

OR

The Reverse.

DISQUISITION I.

On Conduct as it Influences personal and social Well-being.

IT was observed in our introductory Treatise,* when we were considering the causes which create a diversity in our affections, that a great latitude of choice, both with respect to the object and the means, is permitted within the limits of strict propriety. In our progress from the ignorance of infancy to manhood, and from rude uncivilized nature, to the refinements of polished life, infinitely various are the objects soliciting our attention, at every stage; and various are the incidental causes, which influence our choice. Many of these are within the precincts of the strictest propriety. It is also very evident that a diversity in

* See Phil: T. P. ii. C. ii. For the enumeration of particulars.

our opinions and predilections to a certain degree, is, in many cases, a source of much good. As the various classes of animals are made capable of enjoying a great diversity of good, in consequence of their being endowed with particular instincts, correspondent to the species of food destined for their sustenance, thus in the human race, in whom are combined diversities of powers which separately characterize the inferior animals, do we observe a beneficial diversity of tastes and dispositions, arising from peculiarity of temperament, modes of education, habits, national customs, &c. by which the attachments of Individuals to particular objects, become an immediate source of pleasure to themselves, and of utility to others. By this happy constitution of things, each one is able to enjoy his own particular object, with fewer encroachments upon the tastes and preferences of his neighbour. Pursuits and experiments are thus diversified to a great extent, and by means of these we become more intimately acquainted with the nature, qualities, and influences of an infinite variety of objects, to the great augmentation of the general Good.

But there are some actions, dispositions and propensities, concerning which, no one enjoys a discretionary power; some, which are in their very

nature pernicious, and ought at all times to be suppressed; some, which are uniformly beneficial, and ought at all times to be respected and practised. These are immutable in their nature and effects; over which neither difference of sex, periods of life, peculiarities of temperament, custom, fashion, or any other incidental circumstances, are considered as an excuse for a different line of conduct. They are, by universal consent, distinguished by the appellations of VIRTUE and VICE. To these our attention is now to be directed.

The passions and affections of the mind have been classed by us, under two general heads. They were distinguished into those which are of a *selfish*, and those which are of a *social* nature.* The conduct, over which the passions and affections have so great an influence, and which is so powerfully productive of well-being, or the reverse, is in like manner to be contemplated under these distinct heads. Such conduct may relate to the *selfish*, or to the *social* principle. It may primarily, or solely, belong to what is of the greatest benefit or injury to *ourselves*, in our individual capacity; or it may respect our *social* intercourse, and relate to the beneficial offices we are able to perform, in the various relations of life; or to the

* See Phil: Treat.

evils induced upon those with whom we are immediately connected, or diffused over the community at large, by the irregularities and impropriety of our behaviour. We shall consider each in its order.

CHAP. I.

ON THE VIRTUE OF PERSONAL PRUDENCE, AND ITS OPPOSITE.

IT was observed in the introduction to the first part of this Ethical treatise,* that in consequence of the extent, variety, and complication of our social connections, a great majority of those actions, dispositions, and propensities, which we agree to approve or to censure, and to denominate Virtues or Vices, are of a *relative* nature. The approved actions and propensities that are merely personal, in which we conceive of the moral agent individually, and as detached from his social character, free from every species of responsibility to others, and solely attentive to the dictates of self interest, are very few. These may with propriety be resolved into the virtue of *Prudence*; for abstractedly considered, they are confined to personal interest, and personal safety;

* See No. IX.

which, if a man *will*, to neglect or violate, he may be guilty of extreme *folly*, but as he is entirely his own master, and is responsible to no one, the ideas of *duty* and *obligation*, appear to be inadmissible. He that is bound to no one is certainly free. The term obligation implies that others have some kind of claim upon us; and obligation may rise to an indispensible duty, where the claims of others are founded upon just and high pretensions. For this circumstance inscribes a new character upon the action; may render it more than prudent or imprudent; it may become an act of *justice*, and the neglect become highly *criminal*. It has now acquired a *social* or *relative* character. We shall at present consider prudence in the abstracted and insulated Sense.

Personal prudence expresses such a propriety of disposition and conduct, in every circumstance and situation, as shall be the surest protection from any apparent evil; and most productive of the greatest advantage, upon the whole, to the agent. Prudence is the offspring of just discernment; and hence it has acquired the name of practical wisdom. It can only exist, when there has been a due exercise of those important faculties of the soul, attention, inquiry, consideration, and reflection, relative to the things which immediately concern us, as these are preparatory to accurate

conceptions, right discrimination, legitimate inference, and the final decisions of the judgement, by which the prudential conduct is ultimately directed. Prudence is therefore founded upon a knowledge of the nature, tendency, and consequences of facts derived from the observations and experience of others, or of ourselves; and a determination to act in the most beneficial manner.

Personal prudence manifests itself in being upon our guard against every thing that may prove injurious. Where this is impracticable, it submits to a less evil, in order to escape a greater. It gives the preference to the best objects which present themselves to our choice, that we may not rest in an inferior good, where the superior is within our reach. It implies an attention to the proper means of accomplishing the desired end, due exertions in the application of the means, and a firm resolution to persevere in the right path, in the midst of many difficulties, and in opposition to every seduction. It carefully avoids that rashness and precipitancy of conduct, which might augment present troubles, or induce evils at a future period; but it acts with spirit and promptitude, when deliberation and indecision, might be injurious or fatal. Prudence has learned

to appreciate the means of good in our possession, according to their respective degrees of worth, and the consciousness of our own merit in the attainment; and thus it indulges a spirit of contentment, satisfaction, and complacency; those sources of immediate enjoyment. It is cautious not to relinquish present advantages, without the assurance of something preferable. It avoids every risk, where a failure would induce more of misery, than success could confer of benefit. It implants patience in painful and distressing situations, while it encourages hope; and it excites to such exertions, as are rational and promising, in situations the most distressing and perilous. It effectually suppresses every turbulent, unruly, and self-tormenting passion, which at the moment of indulgence often inflicts much greater misery, than the evils resented. It employs every faculty of mind and body, in a manner correspondent with the laws of their destination, without abuse or excess.

Imprudence, on the contrary, is the child of culpable ignorance, or of thoughtless inattention, or of those strong and passionate propensities to immediate gratification, which create an indifference to future consequences. Imprudence is mostly governed by the present feelings, and is hurried into action by the impulse of the moment. It is

occasioned by a quick and vivid perception of some quality in an object, that is of a delusive influence, without the exercise of any of those faculties of mind, by which alone the final issue of every action can be fully discovered. Although Imprudence cannot be accused of a malevolent design, for no one can wish evil to himself, yet it is continually productive of mischief; for it is either blind to dangers and difficulties, or it wantonly and impotently braves them. It is continually prone to neglect and despise a superior good, which it may already possess, and to indulge in a craving after phantoms, which a deluded imagination has represented as more important realities. Under actual sufferings, the impatience, discontent, and envyings, which it inspires, increase the anguish; and it attempts to obtain a release by transports the most tormenting, or by methods which plunge the deeper into misery.

Having thus taken a general view of the nature of prudence and imprudence, we shall descend into some particulars, which will manifest both the extent and importance of their influence.

Prudence, and Imprudence have three distinct characters, according to the different manners in

which they operate. In some cases they primarily respect a conformity, or opposition to the dictates of reason; at other times, they are manifested in the prevalent affections of the mind, when it is placed in peculiar and trying circumstances; and sometimes they are characterized by a veneration for certain principles in our nature, which are acknowledged, by common suffrage, to be highly respectable; or, by a culpable and abandoned violation of them.

The first species of prudence and imprudence relates to forming, or neglecting certain plans, or modes of conduct, in which some temporal advantages, or conveniences are the immediate objects in view. He is considered as a prudent man, who improves those secular advantages which may present themselves, in consequence of the peculiarities of his situation, or the favourable circumstances surrounding him; who embraces every opportunity which justice permits, and reason sanctions, of promoting his own well-being, and that of his dependents. This kind of prudence consists in making the best selection, when a variety of promising projects are before him; in adopting the most efficacious means, and in pursuing his design with care and assiduity. He is deemed imprudent, and an enemy to himself, who neglects such opportunities; who makes an

inferior choice; who acts in an incautious and careless manner; and who, through inattention, or from ignorant self-sufficiency, contrary to the admonitions of his more intelligent counsellors, pursues plans and projects but ill calculated to obtain the desired purpose. In such cases, prudence is generally considered as a branch of wisdom. He is a *wise* man who pursues his best interest by the most probable means, while negligence, or gross and absurd mistakes, have the denomination of *folly;* with various epithets annexed, according to the degrees of deviation from the dictates of a sound understanding.

To the prevalent state of mind in contracted, trying, and afflictive circumstances, which are not to be escaped, or do not admit of a remedy, belong the virtues of Contentment, Fortitude, Patience, Resignation, Humility, and Modesty.——These merit our particular attention.

Contentment.

Upon a former occasion, *Contentment* was considered as an acquiescence of mind in a moderate portion of good possessed*. It implies a percep-

* See Vol. I. Ch. ii. p. 65.

tion that our lot might have been much better; that it is inferior to what many others enjoy, or that it does not fully answer our own expectations; but it is still valued as a desirable good; and this estimation inspires a placid state of mind, which often attracts the envy of those who are reputed to be much more fortunate. Contentment may be inferior to *satisfaction* with respect to instantaneous enjoyment; this being a lively pleasure, excited by the immediate accomplishment of some specific desire, which may be of a transient nature; whereas Contentment respects the permanent influence of the good in possession: consequently, though the pleasing impression may be more moderate, it is much more durable. *Satisfaction* implying the accomplishment of a wish, or the gratification of a desire, does not acquire a character deserving of approbation; nor is it considered as a virtue. Contentment is justly placed among the virtues, as it is the result of proper consideration and meritorious efforts. The mind has weighed every circumstance in its situation in a just balance; has suppressed every wish that is unreasonable or extravagant; appreciates the good, and wisely mitigates the evil; compares its blessings with its deserts, and readily acknowledges that the former greatly preponderate. The Dis-

contented are, on the other hand, much disposed to place too high a value upon their own deserts, or to consider what they possess to be far beneath their claims. The thoughts of a contented mind are more strongly fixed upon the *good* obtained than upon the *evil* that is intermixed; those of the discontented are so occupied by the intermixture of evil, however small, that the good communicates no pleasure. The man possessing this prudential virtue, forms a comparison between his own state and circumstances, and those of persons beneath him; and he perceives that they might have been much more humiliating. The conviction that his lot is superior to that enjoyed by others, has a tendency not only to inspire placid contentment, but the pleasing affections of joy and gratitude. The Discontented form their comparisons from higher blessings allotted to those around them, and these excite the tormenting passions of envy and jealousy.

Virtuous contentment is distinguished from the Indifference of ignorance, by its knowing that there are states and enjoyments superior to its own; and it is distinguished from the Indifference of the slothful, by approving of every proper attempt to advancement in the scale of well-being. This species of prudence will exert itself, where good is to be obtained, without violating the claims of an-

other, and without exposure to those risks which so frequently prove fatal to the Inconsiderate and Imprudent. Virtuous contentment may be connected with the perception, that there are qualities in other objects, and advantages in other situations, highly desirable in themselves; and it will not feel an obligation to remain in its confined and circumscribed sphere, when an enlargement may be lawfully and honourably obtained.

If there be any virtue which is immediately its own reward, it is the virtue of Contentment. It has the wisdom to contemplate *good*, which is always a pleasant contemplation. Discontent has the folly to ruminate upon *evil*, which is always unpleasant. Contentment stands at a distance from the irritations of envy and repining. It enjoys all the sweets of its blessings, and knows their value, while in possession of them. The Peevish and Dissatisfied enjoy nothing of that which is present, and yet murmur at its departure. While impatient discontent acquires the art of extracting misery from *every thing*, and good from *nothing*, prudent contentment *enjoys a something* in every state. It discovers a precious metal in the very ore, which discontent rejects with ignorant disdain, or analyzes only that it may detect some pernicious alloy. In a word, without this prudential virtue of Contentment, no situation, no possessions,

however ample, no accomplishment of the most ardent desire, can be productive of well-being; but the possession of a contented spirit renders the humblest lot a source of true enjoyment, without being an impediment to those plans and pursuits, which are destined to augment the happiness of man.

Fortitude. Courage. Intrepidity. Magnanimity.

We have considered Fortitude, Courage, and Intrepidity, as virtuous affections excited to repel some threatening evil*. Fortitude is a collected state of mind, which opposes itself to dangers and difficulties, with firmness and resolution. Courage has been described as active fortitude, or as expressive of some particular exertion to repel a particular injury. Intrepidity may be deemed the summit of courage, as denoting a superiority to every sensation of fear, in situations most calculated to inspire it.

Where the cause is just, and where all the caution of prudence cannot discover a probable and lawful, or an honourable method of escape, or of securing some grand and important object, without exposure to danger, these affections are view-

* See Vol. I. p. 106.

ed in the light of distinguished virtues. The exercise of these virtues supposes a just discernment of the nature and extent of the danger, and a determination to meet it; founded upon the clear perception, that boldly to face the evil is a method of escaping its effects, much more secure than any method that could be devised by the supple evasiveness of dread. By this token it is distinguished from the presumptuous courage which degenerates into rashness; and which, mostly, augments the evil apprehended, or plunges into others. The absence of virtuous courage is Cowardice and pusillanimity; which either expose to greater dangers, or purchase the appearance of safety by a shameful compromise.

The Ancients had so an exalted opinion of personal courage, that the epithet of *Virtue* was almost exclusively applied to it. Virtue and courage were by many deemed entirely synonymous. In nations at war with each other, and in the heat of contest, it is still considered as a substitute for every other virtue; and atrocities are frequently committed without repugnance or remorse, which would shock the feelings of humanity in calmer moments. The influence of warlike valour upon both body and mind, is singularly great. It seems at once to change the whole character; and it excites to exertions and atchievements, which, at any other season, could not possibly be performed.

It augments muscular strength, and it renders the corporeal frame insensible to pains or fatigues. The eager attention of the mind to the grand object, and its extraordinary agitation, render it superior to surrounding horrors, or even to the apprehension of immediate death. The animating tumult, social sympathy, hopes of triumph, intermixed with wrath against the foe, annihilate all those sensations which every Individual would probably feel, at any other period, from an exposure to scenes much less terrific.

Where danger is urgent, and other methods of escape impracticable, a courageous disposition forms an exalted character, and it is obviously its own reward as it is its own security.

Magnanimity expresses, in addition to the intrepidity of courage, a display of some peculiar greatness of mind; of some generous conduct; in the midst of those conflicts, which inspire inveterate hatred in minds less noble. It greatly exceeds simple intrepidity, by manifesting that the benevolent principle is operative, in the midst of scenes which are most calculated to extinguish its feelings, and which is completely suspended in minds of inferior mould.

Patience. Submission. Resignation.

The virtue of *Patience* refers to something which is to be endured; and expresses the commendable and advantageous manner in which it is endured. It sometimes is manifested by perseverance in a painful and arduous undertaking; sometimes it relates to the exemplary manner in which bodily pains are borne; and at other times, it is exemplified by circumstances which are calculated to depress the mind. In the first case, it approaches to the nature of active courage, and expects to be rewarded by a successful issue. In the other cases, it is a species of passive courage; the whole effort of the mind being exerted to bear the affliction with firmness and resolution; without the indulgence of a repining disposition, or betraying an irritated mind by indecorous emotions, or uttering clamorous and unprofitable complaints.

When the endurance of sufferings does not indicate an abject spirit; where the evil to be sustained is irremediable, or cannot be escaped by justifiable means, Patience is a most eminent virtue. It often manifests a more exalted character than what is displayed in the exertions of

active courage. In the latter, the mind is roused by a potent stimulus, which inspires it with unusual vigour, and imparts unusual strength to the muscular system. It has the hope of a successful issue for an auxiliary, and in the ardor of contest a sense of danger is considerably diminished. In the exercise of this passive virtue, danger has yielded to realities, and nothing remains but the endurance of sufferings, which it is the object of active courage to escape. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, Patience greatly diminishes a sense of evil. It directs the attention to whatever can be soothing to the spirits. It moderates the feelings, either of bodily pain or mental affections, by the firmness of tone which it communicates to the frame. Fretful impatience, on the contrary, is in itself a painful sensation; and, by the activity of a perverse imagination, it renders sufferings of an inferior magnitude intolerable, by dwelling upon every circumstance of aggravation.

Submission is that species of prudent patience, which consists in yielding to the superior power of calamitous events, or their inflictive cause, in cases where they cannot, or ought not, to be resisted. It is in such instances, the Prudence of Necessity, without the exercise of volition from any other motive. Where resistance is impracticable, or would be without avail, it is no vice to yield; but

as the influence upon the mind is entirely compulsive, it scarcely deserves the character of a virtue.

Resignation gives itself entirely over to the afflictive cause. But its influence upon the mind will vary, according to the conceptions formed of the nature and character of the cause. If the evil appear great, and without a remedy, if the agent be relentless and inexorable, it adds to submission the torpor of absolute despair: a paralysis is induced, upon all the powers and propensities to re-action. If the agent possess a moral character, the sufferer will be disposed to hope that complete resignation will operate as a plea for compassion; and where the character of the agent is eminent for clemency, resignation will be treated by the agent himself as a virtue, which entitles to indulgence and commiseration.

Thus are the advantages of Patience, in all its ramifications, obviously great. An impatient man superadds the disorders of his own mind to the afflictions of his body, or the miseries of his state. Circumstances are not only unpleasant and painful, they are also irritating. The impulse of his sufferings upon his mind, and its turbulent re-action, raise a dreadful storm within; while patience, operating like oil upon the troubled waves, diminishes both the turbulence and the

danger. Patient submission feels some of the advantages of calmness; if it be not the result of meanness or pusillanimity, it is free from self-reproach, and is entitled to the reward of self-complacency. When resignation is accompanied with a strong confidence in the agent, it administers no small degree of consolation. It cherishes hope in the midst of sufferings; and it expects not only a future exemption, but a beneficial result, either from the nature of the suffering itself, or from the temper with which it is sustained.

Modesty.

Modesty is another ramification of prudence. In the English language it is a generic term. It is often used as expressive of delicacy in a sexual sense; but it characterises also an amiable reserve and diffidence, where *self* is immediately concerned; and in this sense we shall here consider it.

This species of modesty avoids every thing forward and presumptuous, in the social intercourse. It is not eager to display a superiority of talents, wealth, or station, in order to triumph over others, by which unpleasant feelings, from a perception of inferiority, are excited. True modesty proceeds

from a just discernment of propriety, and is frequently connected with exalted ideas of genuine merit. He that is diffident of his own deserts and powers, possesses an enlarged view of what is excellent; sees the difficulty of attaining it, and laments the slowness of his own progress. Vain persons are, generally speaking, contracted in their knowledge. They are induced, by the shallowness of their own conceptions of the nature of perfection, in any branch of science, or in any accomplishment, to think that they have made a more extensive progress, than a genuine knowledge of themselves will admit. They dream that they excel others, through an ignorance of their own defects; entertain unworthy opinions of the acquirements of those who may be greatly their superiors; and they are total strangers to the extent of those excellencies, in which they vainly suppose that they have made a proficiency.

While the virtue of modesty is an evidence of discretion, respecting the feelings of others, it is an evidence of genuine prudence respecting ourselves. The world is disposed to be liberal where pretensions are moderate; and where there are no appearances of rivalship, or of unmerited claims to superiority; but where there are, men are very tenacious of *their own*; and will acknowledge merit in others with much reluctance. While imper-

tinence and imprudence disgust every one; while pride and self-sufficiency, are eager in their demands of that approbation, which they will not obtain, it is happily secured to the modest and unassuming. There is, it is true, a degree of pleasure in the indulgence of vanity; but it frequently exposes to censure and disgrace: there is a degree of pain in modest diffidence; but it is amply recompensed by the glow of satisfaction, derived from the favourable opinion of others; and by the encouragement thus inspired, that the deficiency is not so great as was apprehended, or too great to be surmounted.

The man of high pretensions and of lofty pride, affects a superiority which is truly inimical. The disdain which he is disposed to manifest, is destructive of the cordial affections of friendship, and is repaid with displacency and hatred; whereas the modest and diffident attract friendship and inspire love.

Humility.

In Humility, moral diffidence is still greater than in modesty. The latter respects the particular state of mind, when in the presence of some spectator. Humility is a more private and a deeper

conviction of defects. The appearance of modesty in the presence of others, may sometimes be ascribed to a temper naturally reserved and timid; to a contracted education; or being unaccustomed to the world; and thus, through a total ignorance of men and manners, it may attribute to others a superiority to which they are not entitled; and which a more intimate acquaintance with their real character would disallow. Humility measures itself by a higher standard. It compares its own deficiencies with the degree of perfection to which it aspires, and is grieved at the disproportion discovered; and this discovery effectually checks every emotion of vanity and pride, which would be so detrimental to its future progress. The deep sense of demerit so peculiar to its nature, suggests motives of contentment, though placed in an inferior station; of gratitude for the blessings enjoyed, though communicated with a more sparing hand; and of patient submission under circumstances, which would prove irritating to the proud and assuming.

Although the reflection upon our own imperfections, be not in itself a source of pleasure, yet its salutary effects more than compensate for the pain induced. Humility is always accompanied with a sincere desire of improvement; which, at the instant, affords some consolation, and promises

more in the sequel. By inspiring patience, contentment, and gratitude, it is conversant with very pleasing sensations. It enjoys the approbation of the worthy and discerning; and this is of higher value than the shouts and tumultuous applause, which the vain may artfully obtain from the indiscriminating multitude: and it is effectually secured from the disappointments and mortifications, to which the ambitious are so frequently exposed. We may here apply, with peculiar propriety, the observation made under the preceding article; it is an universal law, that whoever attempts to intrude his own supposed superiority upon another, raises a spirit of opposition in the minds of all around him; and should they be compelled to praise, it is with inward reluctance. Whoever manifestly undervalues his own accomplishments, without affectation, is secure of the tribute of approbation, even from his rivals. Thus, as humility is in its nature pacific, unassuming, and unprovoking, it lives in peace with all men, and enjoys the habitual comfort of their good-will, without relaxing in its endeavours to make further progress in the excellencies which it loves.

The third characteristic of prudence and imprudence, we have stated to consist in a veneration

for certain principles in our nature, which are universally considered as highly respectable; or, in a culpable violation of them. To this class belong *Industry* and *Indolence*; *Frugality* and *Extravagance*; *Temperance* and *Intemperance*; *Chastity*, *Immodesty*, *Lasciviousness*, &c. &c.

Industry.

Industry is a rational and habitual exercise of our various talents, in order to acquire the means of Good, adapted to our situation in life We all experience that well-being, is not an inheritance. We are destined to pursue it perpetually. This pursuit of well-being or happiness, consists in searching after, and properly employing, the means calculated to produce the desirable end. The means of happiness, and the power of obtaining them, are our constitutional riches; and it is by the exertion of our powers, that we acquire the means. The means multiply, and our powers increase, as we advance in exertions; and these exertions are necessary, in order to surmount that love of ease and of indolence, to which human beings are naturally prone; to which those are peculiarly exposed, whose ideas are few, and whose experience and observations are confined

within narrow limits. Industry, to be productive of happiness, must be a rational exertion, founded upon knowledge and foresight respecting the issue. It is an habitual exertion, built upon a just sense of danger from neglect, and a perception of the advantages to be derived from perseverance. The Indolent consume the stock of good, of which they may be possessed, without making a due provision to supply the waste; and thus they may become destitute and indigent. But as human improvements, considered in the aggregate, are progressive; as new and ample resources of various kinds are open to the industrious, thus in an advanced and cultivated state of society, admitting that an individual may remain stationary in his possessions, he may still become retrograde in well-being. The advancement of others in various species of good, in consequence of their exercising a virtuous industry, ultimately leaves the Slothful and Inactive at a remote distance behind them; and although their *absolute* state may be the same, their *relative* situation is changed; which is a positive deduction from well-being. The flattering ideas of superiority, or the consoling ones of an equality, are lost in the perception, that our inferiors or equals are rising above us; which eventually leaves us beneath them, as certainly as if we had absolutely descended from our

station. The irritations of envy, discontent, and self-reproach, from a conviction of this degrading inferiority, become painful substitutes for those advantages, which might have remunerated laudable exertions.

Frugality.

To prudent industry is the virtue of *Frugality* nearly allied. The man who is industrious, upon rational principles, will not be disposed to squander, wantonly what he has been assiduous to collect; much less will he render it the occasion of evil, by an abusive extravagance. As he has been labouring for good, he will always employ the means in such a manner, as to accomplish the good. He has had a wise end in view, and he will be careful to apply the means his assiduity has obtained, to the fulfilment of his purpose. He will not refuse those present enjoyments which are moderate, lawful, exhilarating and encouraging. The man who never enjoys the present, draws a bill upon futurity that may not be honoured; and thus he may become as destitute, as if he had accumulated no resources. But a wise man, will certainly reserve a considerable portion for a futurity, that may arrive, without bringing with it

the means, or the capacities of obtaining further acquisitions. He remarks, that the prodigal is a wretched accomptant, who acts as if he could not be the poorer by spending all that he possesses; and who does not appear to know, that the profusion which rapidly exhausts his stock, must speedily make him a bankrupt in enjoyment, and precipitate him into misery. On the other hand, true frugality will not be avaricious: for the miser, renders all his labours fruitless. Means never to be used, are means without an end or an object. Nothing remains in recompence for incessant toils, but the erroneous idea that he shall be above want. The idea is erroneous, for he is in perpetual want; notwithstanding his stores, he is still craving for more; while he continues destitute of all those comforts and accommodations, which are in his power, but which he has not the spirit to procure, with ample means in his hands. What he deems inexhaustible reservoirs of good, thus degenerate into stagnant pools; formed by his selfishly impeding the currency of those means of enjoyment, which in their course would have refreshed numbers as well as himself.

Temperance.

The term Temperance is chiefly applied to moderation in eating and drinking. A virtuous temperance in these articles, does not permit either the appetite or the palate, to trespass upon the salutary boundaries of nature. It sets a watch over the luxuries of the table; and permits not its viands to load and depress the animal economy, which they were destined to refresh and invigorate. Temperance resists the seductions of the circulating glass, and watches over the exhilarations it has a tendency to produce, lest they should offend against reason and self-command. Temperance is careful to prevent the seeds of diseases from being transmitted into the system, through the medium of the enticing cup; and it disdains that ebriety which suspends and confounds the exalted faculties of the soul, and thus rejects the grand prerogative of man. Temperance is alarmed at the danger of exciting pernicious passions, or of adding a new stimulus to propensities, too apt of themselves to become unruly.

The evils which temperance escapes, fall to the lot of the Intemperate. For the gratifications of the moment, they barter away the permanent good of health, calm unruffled spirits, fortune,

conscious self-command, habitual preparation for the duties, employments, and contingencies of life. They become the slaves of incidental excitements to mischief; and too frequently, through the indiscretion of an unguarded hour, rendered unguarded by intoxication, make a sacrifice of all that is valuable in life, and plunge themselves into irremediable distress, for the remainder of their days.

Chastity.

Chastity implies such a command over the sexual propensities, that the passions implanted for the important purpose of supporting the existence of the species, by perpetual successions, may not be irregularly indulged, to the injury of the public or the individual. The gratifications of the chaste are sanctioned by reason; are consistent with the order of society, and the peace and happiness of families; yet they are placed, by the man of virtue, in the subordinate class of enjoyments; nor do they occupy the choicest of his thoughts, plans, and projects, as is often the case with a professed Libertine. The truly Chaste will check the rovings of an impure imagination, in their retired moments; nor will they defile the delicate and refined

enjoyments of social intercourse, by the wantonness of indelicate allusions; or by exciting a blush of embarrassment in the cheek of modesty. Chastity is a happy stranger to that debility of frame incidental to excess; and to diseases induced by promiscuous intercourse with the vilest and most degraded of human beings. It is secure from the shame of detection in illicit amours, and it abhors the idea of plunging the partner of criminal pleasures, into the gulph of infamy and wretchedness*.

Moderation.

The proper exercise of all these personal virtues is, in common language, frequently expressed by the term *Moderation.* This term is therefore of universal import. It respects every pursuit, every indulgence, and extends to every lawful propensity. It holds the reins over things perfectly innocent, or in themselves laudable. It cherishes contentment, without destroying activity. It marks the bounds between œconomy and avarice; liberality and profusion; caution and cowardice; courage and rashness; repose and indolence. In every state, in every possession, in every pursuit, there is a medium where good takes its most dura-

* See Vol. II. Abuse of Passions, p. 108.

ble residence, and is enjoyed with the least possible alloy. Whatever does not arise to this medium, is a deficiency, and some good is lost. Whatever exceeds, is a pernicious extravagance, inducing something evil. Moderation aims at obtaining this medium. It may be obliged to suppress many gratifications to which inclination prompts; but it insures the more valuable blessings of contentment, tranquility, and complacency. It enjoys securely and permanently, whatever it possesses; without inducing horrors from excess, whether they consist in disgrace, disease, penury, regret, or remorse. Through the want of moderation, the ambitious lose the advantages of their present pre-eminence; and flushed with their good fortune, like desperate gamesters, persevere in their plans of further advancement, until they are checked in their career, and sink beneath the persons on whom they trampled. Through the want of moderation, accumulated riches are unproductive of the blessings for which they were coveted; the Glutton carries home disease from the festive board; and the Debauchee prematurely brings upon himself all the infirmities of advanced years; the Drunkard reels from the tavern, his passions inflamed, his reason extinguished, a prey to the first temptation, and in danger of falling a sacri-

fice to the sudden emotions, which the most trifling incidents may have excited *.

From the above survey of those personal virtues, which we have included under the general title of *Prudence,* we not only discover three distinct characters, but also the causes why these characters should be ascribed to them.

The slighter omissions to pursue our own interests, to the full extent of our power, may appear imprudent, without being vicious or morally wrong. We may therefore smile at a folly, without feeling resentment against a vice. The objects of human pursuit are many and various; the dispositions and propensities of men greatly differ; the possession of the amplest means does not secure enjoyment, and has at times become the source of vexation and disappointment: these, and similar considerations, afford a latitude to human actions, within the limits of innocence. If any one be disposed to remain satisfied, with what the world in general may deem to be unworthy of his notice, without his neglecting the duty which he owes to his social connections, he is under no obligation to make the opinion of the world the

* See Vol. II. p. 101.

rule of his conduct; and though he may perhaps act unwisely, in thus foregoing what he might have enjoyed, he is still master of his own actions, without responsibility to others. If any one, in his eagerness to obtain an imaginary good, should greatly over value it in the purchase; if he should take infinite pains for a mere trifle; or yield up desirable possessions for what is of little value, we should censure his extreme folly; but when the disadvantages of his folly are confined to himself, we shall not charge him with criminality. On the other hand, the man who steadily pursues his own good, without undue infringement upon others, or the use of improper means; whether this good consist in the augmentation of property, or in the innocent and moderate enjoyment of what he possesses, we shall commend his prudence, but we shall not honour him with the character of being virtuous.

Respecting the second class, which relates to the state of the mind in disadvantageous, distressing, or dangerous situations, we are disposed highly to applaud the virtues of contentment, patience, resignation, fortitude, and modesty; and unless the deficiency in these virtues be very great, we are inclined to soften it down into an human frailty. The extreme difficulty of remaining within the bounds of moderation, in every case, and in all moods; the caution and resolution required ne-

ver to be off our guard; and in the ardour of our pursuit of that which is allowed to be good, always to observe the precise medium, without being either too remiss or too impetuous, demands so nice a balance, both in the judgement and in the affections, that we observe an unfavourable turn of the scale without surprize, or the severity of censure. Right conduct is ONE; deviations admit of various degrees; and the completion of a particular act, may frequently depend upon the nicest circumstances. Caution, for example, may indicate a commendable prudence, in one instance, and in another, nearly similar in appearance, it may become timidity and cowardice. The same observation is applicable to frugality and avarice; and several other virtues and vices that are contiguous to each other, and where the difference consists in defect or excess; the irksome and irritating nature of pain and various mental feelings; the great propensity of self-love in every case to overrate our merits, and exaggerate our sufferings; and many considerations of this nature, incline us to make many allowances for defects which our reason cannot approve. By an inverted ratio, wherever we discover considerable progress to be made in the above virtues, they are sure to be crowned with our warmest applause and admiration. We contemplate with delight the wise and tranquil spirit of that man, who makes

the little he possesses a valuable and enviable treasure, by the contentment with which it is enjoyed; or who has the skill and resolution to mitigate his various sufferings, by patience and resignation. We form the most favourable opinions of those who shew themselves to be humble and diffident. Humility and modesty are peculiarly pleasing, as they manifest an amiable subjugation of that overweening conceitedness, which is so apt to insult others. We infer, that humble minds entertain a much more enlarged sense of excellency, and the difficulty of attaining it, than the insolent and assuming can possibly boast.

The vices of Indolence, Intemperance, and Debauchery, on the other hand, are censured much more than their opposite virtues are applauded. They are reproved as disgraceful violations of those laws of conduct which interest, propriety, and decency, teach every rational being to approve and admire. They are always of a pernicious tendency; and therefore cannot be optional in their nature. A propensity to their indulgence, is not placed upon the footing of natural infirmities, excepting among associates in vice; but it is ascribed to a corrupt and depraved disposition. This propensity clearly indicates, that the love of pleasure is the predominant rule of action; and that sensual gratifications have gained an ascend-

ency, over the nobler pleasures of an intellectual nature, and the choicest affections of the heart; and consequently they are pronounced to be degrading to man.

But the pernicious consequences of these vices are not confined to the persons who commit them. They are highly injurious to others; and may diffuse their baneful effects over society at large. The indolent man is not only guilty of a shameful dereliction of all the active and useful powers of mind and body, but he is an useless or a pernicious member of society. He is a drone in the hive, which consumes the honey of the laborious; and he retains all who are unfortunately dependent upon him, in a state of poverty and want, from which his exertions might have extricated them. The dissipated, extravagant, and intemperate, while they injure themselves, are also highly detrimental in their social connexions. They are at all times unworthy associates, are neglectful of their relative duties; they frequently induce wants upon themselves, which they expect that the humanity of others will relieve; and they reduce to indigence, those who were entitled to look up to them for assistance and protection. Repeated intoxications are, in fact, voluntary fits of insanity, and they frequently induce all the evils of insanity, not only upon them-

selves, but upon those around them. Indiscrete resolutions and decisions, quarrels, bloodshed, and the destructive indulgence of inflamed passions, are the natural result of drowning reason in the poisoned bowl.

The devotees to lustful pleasures, must either associate with the vilest of characters, or seduce the innocent and lovely. By the former, every delicate sentiment is lost, and their moral sense is blunted, until they are scarcely qualified for the society of the virtuous and chaste; though they should not sacrifice all the joys of conjugal and parental affection, for the embraces of an harlot. If they gratify their passions through the means of seduction, they imprint disgrace on the characters of their innocent offspring; perpetuate the shame of the deluded; and diffuse misery over their worthy and respectable relatives, for gratifications which place them upon a level with the brute creation.

These vices, therefore, being disgraceful in their first principle, and so injurious to the peace and welfare of society, it is not surprising that they should be condemned. Self-interest, uniting with the dictates of reason, induces the virtuous to censure them with peculiar asperity.

CHAP. II.

SOCIAL VIRTUES.

NUMBERLESS are the instances which have presented themselves, in the course of our investigations, evincing the absolute dependence of man upon man, for the supply of many natural, and of every artificial want; which manifest, that our best affections and dispositions are of a relative and social nature; that mutual offices of kindness, and reciprocal benefits, can only be cherished by the constant exercise of those qualities, which are the proper objects of attachment. We observe also, that from the diversity of humours, and oppositions of interest, many of the worst passions and affections of the human brest, are occasionally excited, in consequence of our relative characters; such passions and dispositions as have a tendency to alienate the minds of men from each other, and become fatal to all the advantages and joys, that may be derived from the social intercourse. It is therefore obvious,

that to enjoy every benefit from this intercourse, and escape the evils to which it is exposed, the strictest attention must be paid to certain dispositions and modes of conduct; individual rights are to be respected; the more disinterested affections are to be assiduously cultivated; concessions of our just claims must be occasionally made; essential assistance is to be rendered upon particular emergencies, although attended by the loss of some personal conveniencies. Thus only it is that the greatest possible good can be extensively diffused; and all those horrors be prevented, which arise from the indulgence of the selfish, turbulent, and malignant passions.

The social virtues productive of these ends, may be comprised under *Justice* and *Benevolence*; and the vices injurious to them, are injustice, and malevolence, or cruelty.

Justice. Injustice.

These denote the disposition and conduct which refer to the undoubted rights of another. Every man has a something which he is entitled to call *his own*; and however unimportant it may appear

to those around him, he is disposed to place a great value upon it, *because it is his own.* The idea of exclusive property is a pleasing idea, and adds a something to the well-being of the individual. Rights are of various kinds; life, liberty, personal security from attacks and insults, the means of good lawfully obtained, whether it be by inheritance, gift, purchase, or the result of personal exertions, are considered as exclusive rights. These are the means of good; and whoever unjustly deprives another of them, necessarily deprives him of all that good, they might have bestowed. There are also many other claims of right, by virtue of the various relations and connections of life, in which the kind affections are immediately concerned; as the assiduous care of parents, the obedience of children, conjugal fidelity, the obligations of friendship, &c. These are claims upon others which they neither have a right to refuse or evade; and the loss of which becomes the immediate loss of actual enjoyment.

Injustice is a trespass upon all such rights. It is guilty of neglects, encroachments, violations, by which the claimant is deprived of a something which nature, or some species of compact, had constituted his own; and it assumes the character of fraud, deceit, usurpation, oppression, or cruelty, according to the manner adopted, or the means

employed, and the pernicious effects produced.

Justice therefore pays the strictest attention to whatever is equal and right, from the most important, to the minutest claims. It is attention to those principles of equity, by which the nice balance of good, belonging to each individual, is preserved; and of which he cannot be deprived, without encroachments upon his well-being.

According to this representation of the nature of justice, it manifestly consists of the following particulars;

Justice deprives no one of the good to which he is entitled:—This constitutes robbery and plunder.

Justice cannot enjoin upon another, the performance of more than the claimant has a right to demand:—This is oppression; it renders power the only rule of action.

Justice cannot exact from others more than their talents, situations, and powers, enable them to accomplish:—This is to demand an impossibility; it is both cruel and irrational. The utmost of its demand in this case, is a strenuous exertion in the use of all the means, that can possibly be obtained.

Justice cannot inflict punishments which have not been deserved; for the very nature of punishment is to chastise a delinquent. Where there

has been no delinquency, every attempt to punish, is an act of cruelty. It is also obvious that where the punishment exceeds the offence, the surplus becomes itself an offence; it is an act of injustice.

From the first article, arise different characteristics, respecting individual acts, in our social intercourse, such as *Honesty*, *Fidelity*, *Veracity*.

Honesty, according to its derivation, may be said to express whatever is just, respectable, and honorable; but in its familiar use, it is mostly confined to upright dealings in our commerce with the world, and the sincerity of our conduct towards each other. It defrauds no one of that to which he has a claim, by nature or by compact; even in the minutest article. It is actuated by the love of justice; and scorns to take advantage of the ignorance, or inattention of another; or to screen itself behind the imperfection of human laws.

Fidelity chiefly respects services of a civil or social nature. It executes the offices enjoined, with an eager attention to the requisitions and interests of the principal, in opposition to the strongest inducements to betray the trust, that may arise from a sense of danger, or the seductions of self interest. It is peculiarly applicable to friendship.

It expresses the sincere and unreserved manner

in which salutary advice is given, to any one who may rely upon our judgments; and also the freedom of our admonitions and reproofs, whenever a sense of obligation renders reproof necessary.

Veracity consists in a determined fidelity, respecting the report that is made of what we know, in opposition to intentional deception; or in the love of truth, and hatred of falshood and lies.

This is a most important branch of justice. Every man has a right to true information, concerning the things which properly belong to him; and the want of veracity deprives him of this species of good. It is a privation of a most injurious tendency. The indispensible importance of truth, to protect us from the fatal effects of error, must be self-evident. The observations and experience of an individual, however extensive they may seem, are extremely limited, when compared with the stores of knowledge we are able to collect, from the observations and experience of numbers. But it is only by the powers of communication, that such knowledge can be enjoyed by others; and as accurate knowledge is necessary, that we may escape numberless errors of conduct, mutual veracity becomes a mutual guarantee against the fatal effects of ignorance. He that makes a false report, may induce an injury beyond the power of calculation; and if he deceive inten-

tionally, he is, in the eye of reason, responsible for the evil consequences which may result. Mutual veracity is the basis of society. It enables us to march together through life with a bold and firm step. Falshood is a traitor under the mask of friendship. It does worse than detain us in that state of ignorance, from which we aim at being exempt; it exposes us to new dangers, from the confidence inspired, that we are no longer ignorant. While conscious of our want of information, we should perhaps have continued inactive; upon a presumption of knowledge we may act to our destruction. False information is a deceitful beacon, which inspires hopes of safety, while it allures towards a tremendous rock, or devouring quicksands. But there is no species of veracity more important than the performance of a promise. A promise is an assurance given, that some act shall be performed to the benefit of another. It is a species of transfer, by anticipation, and is always considered as yielding up a right to the thing promised. It naturally inspires hopes; it gives a new range to the ideas; new projects are formed; and the mind already enjoys to a certain degree, the pleasure to be derived from the promised good. A breach of promise is most sensibly felt, not only as a disappointment, but as an unjnst privation, of that which

the promiser had rendered our own; and to the vexations of disappointment, are added the irritations of anger and resentment.

The perfection of a just character is denoted by the expressive terms, *Integrity* and *Uprightness*. The first relates to an entire uniformity of conduct, in every minute particular. The man of integrity practises every part of social justice, without reserve or omission. He is conscientiously accurate in all his dealings; faithful to every trust; tenacious of every promise; and disdains to dissemble or prevaricate. Uprightness expresses the same character in a state of dignified elevation. It deems every act of injustice as a meanness to which it scorns to stoop.

Clear conceptions of justice manifest the nature of Injustice. It withholds that which is due; it invades the most precious rights of the claimant, and deprives him of that happiness, which he has a title uninterruptedly to enjoy. Injustice obviously consists of various degrees, both of criminality and of injury; assuming the character of *fraud, deceit, usurpation, tyranny, oppression,* and *cruelty*; according to the manner adopted, or the means employed, and the injuries committed.

The injustice of fraud and deceit, consists in the use of some particular artifice, to gain the confidence of the person on whom the act is commit-

ted. It obtains or withholds his property under false pretences; or deprives him of a portion of what is due, by a partial and imperfect performance of the stipulated agreement. The practical difference between fraud and deceit, principally consists in the extent of the intended injury, and the mode of conducting it. A privation of the whole, or of a large portion of that which is due to others, is deemed a fraudulent act. Swindlers, Sharpers, false Coiners, &c. sufficiently illustrate the meaning of the term. Deceit, in its usage, is most correspondent with slighter tricks; such as disposing of goods of inferior value, as if they were of prime quality; vending adulterated articles as pure and genuine; making false declarations respecting their original price, the country whence they were bought, &c. &c. This vice chiefly respects that part of the mercantile world, who term themselves *fair traders.*

To *usurp,* properly signifies to seize, or unlawfully use, that which is the property of another. It is now chiefly applied to the unjust possession of power; to seizing the reigns of government by force or treachery; bringing those who were freemen under the yoke of despotism; or forcibly compelling subjects to change their rulers.

Tyranny, is injustice committed by one in the possession of power, who openly violates the

rights and claims of others, by the arbitrary exertion of an authority which they have not the means of opposing.

Oppression, takes advantages of power lawfully or unlawfully obtained; exacts from others more than is justly due, or inflicts burdens grievous to be borne. It frequently acts under the sanction of human laws, to which it gives its own interpretation; but which tyranny openly defies.

Cruelty, is an act of injustice, which chiefly respects the *misery* inflicted upon its object. The term does not pay a primary attention to the advantages gained by the agent. This vice manifests a wanton obduracy of heart, more than either of the preceding. Every other act of injustice may originate from an inordinate desire of gain, or the lust of power; which may have tempted the aggressor to suppress, in particular instances, without totally destroying, the natural feelings of humanity. In acts of cruelty, these feelings appear to be totally eradicated, and to be supplanted by a spirit of revenge or malignity.

The above remarks chiefly relate to those obvious and overt acts of injustice, from which respectable characters are exempt. But there are many instances of injustice, which are no less real, though they may be less apparent; and which by

their continually operating, are extremely injurious to social happiness. If it be a characteristic of justice, that it deprives no one of the good to which he is entitled, we may discover many instances of injustice, and even of cruelty, which are committed by persons, who are not conscious of the evil. We may frequently observe that those who are most scrupulous, respecting those means of good, that relate to any kind of property, are yet guilty of unjust privations, respecting the grand article *Good itself.* The man who will be minutely accurate, in the payment of the stipulated wages of his servant, and would blush at the idea of defrauding him of a shilling, will render his existence comfortless, by the unjust impetuosities of his temper, and by perpetual dissatisfactions, at the most strenuous endeavours to please; and thus rob a dependent of more real enjoyment, than the whole of his wages could have purchased. The parent who is solicitous to enrich his children, and employs many an anxious hour to promote their happy establishment in the world, may render them completely miserable by the unjust severity of his temper, or habitual moroseness of his conduct. Or he may defraud a dutiful child of his kindest affections, and bestow them upon a less deserving favorite. These, and many other instances which might be adduced, are

acts of injustice more severely felt than various privations, which are stigmatized by the name of fraud and deceit. If privations of certain means of good which are due, be considered so disgraceful, and injurious, surely that privation of immediate good and permanent comfort, which our dependents and relative shave a right to claim, and which constitute the habitual enjoyment of life, are more pernicious in their effects, although they may not be so criminal in the motives.

Benevolence.

The love of justice simply expresses a right disposition towards that which is equitable, whereby no one shall be deprived of the portion of good to which he is entitled; nor is it accompanied with that ardent desire to diffuse happiness, over beings capable of enjoying it, which characterises *Benevolence*. It is considered as an indispensible principle of action, rather than as constituting an affection of the heart. It could not therefore have a place in our inquiries into the nature of the human passions and affections. Benevolence, or the sentiments and feelings of good-will towards others, being not only an affection, but a pre-eminent affection, was minutely consi-

dered in our introductory volume*; which supersedes the necessity of enlargement in this place. We shall confine ourselves to a concise statement of the principles that have been advanced, and apply them to the subject immediately before us.

It has been observed, that benevolence respects both good desires and dispositions towards others; and also favourable opinions concerning them. Its opposites, *malevolence* and *displacency*, imply ill-will and ill-designs towards another, and also unfavourable opinions. Benevolence may be considered as a principle, constituting a predisposition or readiness of temper, to impart good to susceptible beings, or to participate in their welfare. It is primarily exercised toward those who have a common interest with ourselves, in the conjugal, parental, filial, fraternal relations, particular friendship, &c.; and it extends to those who are more remote from us; assuming the title of general benevolence, and ramifying into the affections of compassion, mercy, pity, liberality, and sympathetic joy, at the good fortune of others; and thus acquiring various denominations and degrees of excellency, according to the peculiarities of its application to their state, exigencies, or character. It was also observed that the complacential regards

* See page 125.

and favourable opinions entertained, relative to the characters and conduct of our associates, was accompanied with a *love* towards them; was productive of the warmer affections of gratitude and admiration, respecting particular acts or dispositions of the object; or the calmer ones of esteem, respect, veneration, &c. according to the ideas formed of their permanent characters. Malevolence and displacency operate in a contrary direction. Malevolence, or ill-will, is manifested by malignity, envy, resentment, transports of anger, cruelty, &c. Displacency is marked by the emotions of horror, indignation, contempt, irrision; or the milder indications of censure and disapprobation.

This concise recapitulation of the principles which have already passed under examination, will be sufficient to evince, how much the affections of benevolence contribute to the peace and felicity of the human mind; and in what respects, and to what degree, those of malevolence have a tendency to destroy it. The affections which have good for their object, are always pleasing; the opposites are always sources of painful perturbation. In the warm affections of gratitude and admiration, the humiliating ideas of inferiority, are absorbed by the pleasures enjoyed by the

benefit conferred, and in love to the donor. The superiority acknowledged in every expression of admiration, instead of exciting envy, infuses transports. The kind affections of social life, constitute the whole of its sweets; diminishing every trouble and augmenting every enjoyment. When most inactive, benevolence imparts a placid serenity to the mind. Nor can it be exerted in particular offices, without conscious sensations of good in the breast of the agent himself. Malevolence, when least active, is a secret corrosion; and its exertions implant the strongest sensations of misery.

The extensive power of benevolence to alleviate the ills, and promote the happiness of mankind; and that of malevolenee to diffuse wretchedness, are too conspicuous to demand amplification. This evil principle is the bane of all social intercourse; diffusing horror as far as its influence extends. The minute ramifications of good will are admirably adapted to meet the peculiar exigencies of its objects; alleviating distresses; removing anxious apprehensions; consoling the afflicted; increasing a scanty store of enjoyment; and even augmenting the felicity of the fortunate, by a generous participation. Strict justice does not augment happiness, it simply prevents a diminution. It imparts no other good than that

derived from avoiding an injury. It does not commit a robbery, and is contented. Benevolence is a volunteer in the service of Good: it is the champion of well-being: it delights to augment the prosperity of the happiest; and it searches into the abodes of Misery, with a desire to extirpate the enemy.

There is a species of benevolence, which, although it be less splendid in appearance, and more circumscribed in its exertions, is of high importance to the peace and harmony of social intercourse; which is the virtue of *Discretion*. This virtue is frequently considered as a branch of prudence, although it primarily respects others and not ourselves*. It avoids those inadvertencies in speech and conduct, which might incidentally prove injurious, or unnecessarily give offence. Indiscretion either not perceiving, or not regarding, those attentions which, in civil society, one man expects from another, frequently excites severe displeasure, without designing to displease. Discretion is a singular compound of prudence, benevolence, and justice. It is a preservative against incidental resentments and ill-will; it is cautious not to injure the feelings of those who

* See Note A.

are deserving of our notice; and it is pained by such inadvertencies as might, in any respect, prove injurious. It is a practical discrimination suggested by a benevolent temper, respecting propriety of behaviour in circumstances peculiar and delicate; and it contributes essentially to the pleasures of social intercourse, as its operations are perpetual.

The above remarks discover to us several other characteristic distinctions between the operations of simple justice, and those of the benevolent principle.

The natural rights of man being circumscribed, they are, generally speaking, clearly indicated and defined: so that there is little room for embarrassment, and none for hesitation. But the acts of benevolence, are destined to operate far beyond the confines of the strictest justice; and to diffuse a larger portion of good than could be enjoyed, by the full possession of our natural rights. Yet the acts of benevolence are to be considered as occasional acts, solicited by peculiar circumstances, rather than being obligatory in every instance, like those acts which characterize justice. What is due to another, ought at all times to be conceded to him; the act cannot be withheld. Benevolence claims a discretionary power, and

has something optional in every act, respecting its object and extent. Although our intellectual faculties fully ascertain that benevolence of temper is an excellence, and the practice of it a duty, yet they clearly perceive that its operations cannot, like those of justice, be reduced to weight and measure. The indigent and afflicted have claims upon our humanity, but not in every particular instance of distress. They can make no demand of right in any one instance. Generosity is an excellent virtue, and ought to be practised; but *when* it ought to be exercised, and in *what manner*, and to what *extent*, will depend upon many contingencies. Liberality will bestow gifts; but without some limits to liberal conduct, the amplest funds would be exhausted; and without discernment, they might be exhausted upon the unworthy, to the detriment of the deserving. Compassion naturally prompts to assist and comfort the afflicted; mercy will be inclined to remit punishments; but as the one cannot alleviate every distress, nor ought the other always to remit punishments, so the exercise of a just discernment is requisite to select proper objects, and circumscribe the boundaries. Compassionate aid must be regulated by the state, the character of the object, the resources of the benevolent man, and the

surrounding claims of others. Mercy itself, injudiciously exercised, might defeat its own purpose.

But notwithstanding these necessary restrictions, it is still the grand object of benevolence to diffuse happiness, far beyond the power of justice. This prevents encroachments; benevolence confers blessings. It diminishes miseries which justice could not assuage, but might perhaps inflict; it augments enjoyment beyond the claims of equity. It is not only respectable, it is *amiable*. It is not simply just, it is *good*. The strictest exercise of justice may be performed by one who has no attractions; in whom a selfishness of temper is still conspicuous. Benevolence makes voluntary sacrifices; places *self* at the remotest distance; stifles the resentments which injuries are calculated to excite; and remits the demands of which justice may be tenacious, in order to promote the welfare even of an offender.

The above character of Benevolence, will sufficiently distinguish it from every spurious act which imposes upon the unwary and inexperienced. There is a thoughtless good nature, which is pleasing in itself, and may confer incidental benefit; but not being directed by principle, is very frequently erroneous; and the good it produces is very circumscribed. The dissipated youth who

spends his patrimony among the worthless, may applaud his own liberality, but he will be condemned by the wise, and probably be despised by the participators of his bounty; for they may be fully convinced of his want of discernment. The ambitious man, who courts popularity by splendid acts, is not beneficent, but selfish and designing; and although the diffusion of his wealth, may prove very acceptable to the objects of his apparent bounty, yet he is merely purchasing a commodity, which he values more than he does the purchase money; and instead of being deserving of public applause, he may be censured by the discerning, for having made an unprofitable bargain. Nor can we consider those actions as marks of genuine munificence, which are performed through means that have been obtained by injustice. The riches amassed by fraudulent practices, or by tyranny and oppression, may be liberally bestowed on public charities; may be devoted to the endowment of churches and hospitals; the donor may have monuments erected to his memory, or he may be canonised as a saint; but he has attempted to purchase reputation with the property of others; to dazzle the eyes of the world, that his crimes may not be discerned; or to compound with heaven for his nefarious practices,

by the consecration of what is not his own, at the hour when it can be retained no longer. These, instead of being acts of munificence and charity, are no other than *splendida peccata*; the delusive decorations of the ambitious and depraved.

The general survey we have taken of the conduct and dispositions, universally acknowledged to be virtuous or vicious, so fully manifests their influence upon personal and social well-being, that they require not further investigation. The cultivation of prudence, justice, benevolence, in all their branches, is not merely of *some importance*, it is *absolutely necessary*, to the possession and diffusion of that extensive good, after which we so ardently pant; to attain which our nature is rendered capable; and of which vice is the venom and the canker. It is a fact which no one can deny, that the regular and steady practice of every virtue, would raise human felicity to the most exalted state of perfection. Were every man *prudent*, extensively and uniformly, he would extract the greatest possible good from every posssible situation. He would arrive and repose at the true point of enjoyment, perfectly secure from the numberless vexations, disappointments, and hor-

rors, in which the imprudent are so frequently involved. Were every man *just* and *upright*, each individual would march with a firm step in paths of perfect peace :—all the irritated, irritating, and malignant passions would subside :—man would no longer be a terror to man :—the voice of lamentation would seldom be heard, and the voice of reproach would be for ever silent. Were every man *benevolent*, he would alleviate the numerous wants, and mitigate the distresses which justice itself was impotent to relieve ; and confer greater enjoyments, than it is in the power of justice to protect. Benevolence is the virtue of a feeling heart, and it renders the feeling heart of the befriended object peculiarly happy, by the inspiration of those delightful affections, Love, Friendship, Gratitude, and Complacency. By universal *Discretion*, minuter injuries and displeasures would be unknown ; mutual confidence would be diffused over every part of our social intercourse ; we should travel smoothly through every stage of our existence, strangers to the rude shocks of impertinence and indiscretion ; assiduously and successfully studying our mutual accommodations on the road. It is this virtue of discretion, which forms the basis of what is termed *politeness*, in genteel circles ; which is so attractive and engaging,

that it is frequently presented and *accepted*, as a substitute for more substantial virtues. The semblance of good-will displayed by an urbanity of manners, is found to be more captivating, than greater benefits conferred with a roughness in the mode, which approaches to an indiscretion.

DISQUISITION

THE SECOND.

ON MORAL CONDUCT,

OR

The Nature of Morality; its Laws, Motives, &c.

DISQUISITION II.

On Moral Conduct.

THE disposition of every one to pursue his own interests, supersedes the necessity of recommending the practice of all the *personal* virtues as a *duty*, where a conviction is implanted that such a conduct is the only road to happiness: nor would the term be applicable; as duty and obligation, are, strictly speaking, *relative* ideas. The eagerness with which we seize all the means of Good, when we know of what they consist, and where they are to be found, annihilates the idea of an *obligation*, in a moral sense of the word. But the case is very different respecting the practice of the *social* virtues. As self-interest is not here the professed object in view, but the interests of others, it is necessary to introduce some efficient principle or principles, with which the ideas of *duty* and *obligation* are intimately connected; and without

which, every man would think himself at liberty to act as he pleases. An opposition of interests frequently presents itself in the universal pursuit after the means of Good; and excepting some other law of conduct were operative, than that of personal welfare, universal anarchy would take place, to the subversion of social intercourse, with all its blessings. To prevent these horrors, human nature is endowed with certain principles, which meet with the approbation of all; and to which it has been invariably expected, that intelligent creatures should conform. To these we shall now direct our notice.

This subject has deeply engaged the attention of moralists:—*The foundation of Virtue,—what are the proper motives for the practice of Virtue;—the nature of moral obligation,* or the principle which constitutes any particular act an indispensible *duty,* or stamps *criminality* upon its opposite; are questions which have given rise to much controversy in the philosophical world; and this sufficiently manifests that the subject is surrounded with difficulties. Since the work before the reader, is solely intended for practical uses, the author is studious to avoid whatever has the appearance of being theoretical and speculative. A simple statement of facts is more congruous to the mo-

ral history of the human mind, which he is attempting to give; and he leaves it to others to draw whatever inferences they may deem legitimate. Yet he is not without hopes, that these moral researches, which assume a direction rather unusual, will spread many important truths before the philosophical reader, to which the partial and contracted nature of controversy, may have rendered him too inattentive; and that some difficulties will of themselves be resolved, by a more comprehensive statement of facts, than controversy is disposed to admit.

In the following Disquisition, we shall endeavour to trace the origin of the opinions maintained, by mankind in general, on the subject of virtue and morality: such as relate to the specific nature of virtue and vice;—the pleasant or unpleasant impressions which the perception of virtuous and vicious conduct, uniformly make upon the human mind;—the conceptions formed of merit and demerit,—and of moral obligation. We shall also search after those principles which are uniformly permitted to influence human conduct; and the relation they may have to the practice of virtue. We shall next examine which of these

principles is, in its own nature, best calculated to promote the steady and uniform practice of every virtue; and finally attempt to trace the origin and progress of the social virtues, and religious affections in the human mind.

CHAP. I.

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE OPINIONS MAINTAINED RESPECTING VIRTUE, MORALS, &c.

SECT. I.

ON THE APPLICATION OF THE TERMS VIRTUE AND VICE, TO CONDUCT AND DISPOSITIONS: AND THEIR TRUE IMPORT INVESTIGATED.

THE ample view that has been taken of the nature of Virtue and Vice, and their immediate influence upon personal and social well-being, will enable us to ascertain the reason, why these terms have been invariably chosen by moralists, to express right and wrong conduct; describing, by, as it were, a telegraphic brevity, the opposite characters of good and bad men. We shall consider each distinctly.

Virtue.

This word has, at different periods, and in various connexions, been variously applied; and yet it will appear upon minute examination, that in every connexion it expresses a *salutary force* and *energy*. It is used to denote an inherent power of a *beneficial* nature, and a vigorous exertion of that power. Thus we say that particular effects have been produced, by *virtue* of certain means employed. It is frequently said of medical drugs, that they retain, or have lost their *virtues*; that is, their power of producing the salutary effects, which they usually produce. Many expressions in common phraseology evince, with great accuracy and precision, that the power expressed by the word Virtue refers to something *beneficial*. Whatever is decidedly *injurious* to ourselves, we may ascribe it to a *Virus* or a *Venom*, but never to a *Virtue*. Yet we shall adopt the term, whenever the power of doing injury to others, is beneficial to ourselves. Gunpowder will be said by the warrior to possess *Virtue*, according to its strength, or the power of extending destruction among his foes; and the Indians, who are accustomed to poison their arrows, will complain, that the poi-

son has lost its *Virtue*, with its powers of destruction. That quality inherent in bodies, by which an injury may be produced, unconnected with beneficial effects of any kind, is called its *Virus*; and this term will be deemed to be uniformly applicable, as long as we remain ignorant of its power of effecting good But when this power is discovered, and applied to salutary purposes, it is immediately dignified with the title of *Virtue*. Physicians speak of the *Virus* of the natural small-pox, but when they apply this *Virus* to the beneficial purposes of inoculation, it changes its nature, in their opinion, and possesses a positive *Virtue*. Opium and arsenic, were once considered as unqualified poisons; but since the beneficial effects of both in various diseases, have been discovered, they are allowed to possess great *medical Virtues*.

Hence it is clear, that the primitive and genuine idea annexed to the word Virtue, is that of a *beneficial* power; and whatever is able to produce some species of good, by its energies and operations, is acknowledged to possess some species of Virtue. Accordingly, in the ruder state of society, before the mental powers were sufficiently awakened, or instructed, to form deep-laid schemes of attack or defence; before men were

conversant with those arts of war, which could alone be the result of observation and experience; when corporeal strength, was the only means that could be employed to assail a foe, or repel an insult; there was much *Virtue* in the arm of a champion; and the man who exerted it successfully in defence of his party, became a man of high renown. The transition from muscular force to personal courage, which held danger in contempt, and to that energy of mind, which prompted to the execution of the most dangerous enterprises was natural; and *Virtue* became the proper term to denote *Valour* and *Prowess*. But when the ruder state of society gave way to more regular establishments; when the interests of communities, became more extensive and complex, as the means of good were multiplied and appreciated; the ideas of property, and the claims of individuals, became more numerous and diversified; and in proportion as those inequalities in the states and conditions of men, which proceeded from an universal struggle after happiness, with unequal powers, became obvious and striking, the necessity of what we now term *Prudence*, *Discretion*, *Integrity*, and *Benevolence*, in their various branches, became evident; and the word *Virtue* was applied, as it were by common consent, to those acts and dispositions, upon which the existence, harmony,

and happiness of society, immediately depend. It is not surprising therefore, that in the more advanced stages of social intercourse, we should more frequently hear of the *relative, conjugal,* and *social Virtues,* than of those which distinguish the *Warrior* and *Champion,* which are not so perpetually in exercise.

Thus, in all the gradations through which the word Virtue has passed, it has always retained the character of a beneficial influence. When applied to human beings, we infer a voluntary agency. To a perception of what is proper, because it is beneficial, is united a firm disposition to perform it. This necessarily includes an exertion of power against some opponent. Such is the object in the exertion of every mechanical and chemical power, and of corporeal strength; and it is also the object of all mental energy. Since knowledge is not an inheritance, it is only to be acquired by the exertions which subdue our natural indolence, and conquer the difficulties of attainment. Wisdom is the result of much mental exertion, to discover, and judiciously to employ, the most proper means to accomplish some useful purpose; and although neither knowledge nor wisdom are, in the present day, placed among the virtues, yet the *pursuit* of them is. The improvement of the mind is a virtuous diligence, directed towards the most import-

ant of all objects; while obstinate, and wilful ignorance, proceeds from the contemptible vice of indolence. Every ramification of prudence indicates a self-command, which strenuously opposes the strongest solicitations of some seducing and ensnaring object. Justice and integrity, determine to do whatever is right, in the midst of all the temptations arising from flattering prospects of ambition or of opulence, and the fair promises of secrecy. Benevolence possesses the distinguished power, of making a voluntary sacrifice of those personal rights, which the selfish man so highly values. It liberally bestows what the avaricious carefully hoard. It voluntarily endures the pangs of sensibility, which may soothe and relieve those who suffer still greater pains. It relaxes the rigid claims of right, and suppresses the desire of revenge, as often as propriety admits; and resolves to forgive, in many cases where it has the unrestrained power to punish. Thus does the virtuous man conquer himself. He is the courageous and triumphant hero, who subdues the formidable enemy within: he exerts the best powers of his mind, to gain the ascendency over every thing that is unworthy and pernicious *.

* See note B.

Vice.

Qualities, powers, and propensities, of a *noxious* tendency, are not expressed by a simple term. Accurate language, in order to describe existent diversities, has adopted the words virus, venom, poison, and *vice*; and these denote the various kinds of pernicious influence, exerted over animated and rational beings. All these expressions convey ideas perfectly distinct from destructive powers occasionally and incidentally exerted, by natural or physical agency. There is neither virus, venom, poison, nor vice, ascribed to the storms which overwhelm the ship floating on the ocean; nor to the flames which consume our dwellings. The terms are confined to qualities radically and unequivocally injurious; they *uniformly* suggest the idea of *mischief*. But although they agree in this general effect, there is a diversity in their application.

Virus, denotes a pernicious quality in vegetable or animal substances, arising from some accidental degeneracy of their fluids. Thus we speak of the virus of the small pox, of pestilential diseases, putrid miasmata, and the virus communicated by the bite of a mad animal. *Venom* is applied to those destructive fluids, which are constitutionally formed in organized bodies, essential to their re-

spective natures, and are communicated to other living bodies, by the instinctive agency of some animated beings; as the sting of a bee, the bite of a scorpion, &c. *Poison* is a general term, more applicable to pernicious effects than to specific causes. It expresses the power of producing injury, seated in bodies promiscuously; without paying immediate attention to the manner in which the power was acquired. Thus both virus and venom, may be considered of a poisonous nature, from the effects produced by them. We speak also of vegetable and mineral poisons; that is, of substances, which by their great activity, in very small quantities, may disorder or destroy the animal frame. These detrimental qualities are called poisons; although as we have remarked above, when these same powers are skilfully applied, so as to be productive of *good*, we immediately denominate them *virtues*.

Vice, strongly marks the injurious nature and effects of some human propensities. Etymologists tell us, that the word is derived from the latin *vilo*, refering to an evil which all should be solicitous to escape, or avoid. It is always placed in opposition to virtue, being most opposite in its nature, influence and character. As virtue is a quality in the mind that exalts the subject, in proportion to the degrees of its excellency, thus vice

is an opposite quality, which has its degradations, sinking the character proportionably below the level of innoxious beings. It is considered as a pernicious quality, generated by whatever has a tendency to corrupt the human mind, and render it depraved. Hence it admits of various degrees, correspondent with the virus which occasionally corrupts our fluids. Were it naturally inherent, it would resemble the *venom* of animals; which is in its nature constitutional; nor does it admit of similar gradations in the same individual. It is upon its being more accidental, and not essentially permanent in the same species, that we sometimes apply the term to animals that are restive or unruly; or that are not easily trained to useful and peaceful habits. Thus we ascribe vices to a horse, that will not obey the whip or the spur; or to an ox, that attempts to gore the attendants, instead of yielding his neck to the yoke. In every sense it is a term of reproach, used to express a pernicious deviation from a more harmless and useful tenor of conduct.

The extensive views that we have taken of the miseries introduced into human life, by the vices of ignorance, indolence, intemperance, injustice, envy, cruelty, &c. sufficiently manifest the close analogy that subsists between vice and the noxious qualities noted above. Vice is the *virus* of

the mind; and as far as it extends its baneful influence, it poisons all the sources of happiness.

Hence it is that some of the evil passions of men, are so frequently and forcibly expressed by metaphors, taken from these various noxious qualities: and it is remarkable, that those particular distinctions are also noted, by the different manners in which the metaphors are used. *Virulence*, which is obviously derived from *virus*, best expresses a rapid, and pernicious violence in the occasional sallies of temper. It refers to the angry passions that are excessive; and which are not exempt from a great degree of malignity at the time. Thus we say "he was vehement against him to a degree of *virulence*: His language was very *virulent*: He was too *virulent* in his reproaches, notwithstanding they were founded in justice." But the word *venom*, best expresses malignity itself. It supposes that the subject possesses an envenomed bosom, and a kind of organization, as it were, destined to the secretion of malignity. This word describes, not merely a person in a fit of wrath, but one who harbours malice, who malignantly stings, and does intentional mischief. In ruder phraseology, it is said that "he spits his venom:" which immediately raises in the mind the idea of a noxious animal determined to injure. Strokes of satire, in which the malignity may be

more obvious than the wit, are poetically termed *envenomed shafts.*

Poison, as a metaphorical expression, does not so immediately refer either to the culpable irritations of the moment, or to the deeper malignity of the heart. It is often applied to a pernicious, or destructive influence, unconnected with the moral character or designs of the agent. Thus we say of particular sentiments, that "they have a tendency to poison the mind;" although he that advances them may possibly design to improve it. Books of a certain description, are represented as dangerous, from "having a tendency to poison the morals:" and all the happiness of a family is said to be *poisoned,* by the ill conduct or misfortunes of some individual belonging to it.

Such is the respectable connexion in which whatever is deemed vicious, in the tendency or design, is placed; nor is the arrangement inaccurate or unjust.

SECT. II.

ON THE APPROBATION AND DISAPPROBATION OF HUMAN ACTIONS; AND THEIR ORIGIN.

THE terms *Virtue* and *Vice*, not only express a *beneficial*, and *pernicious* energy, but they contain also a latent *approbation* or *censure* of the agent. The idea excited by an act we pronounce to be *virtuous*, is not only that it is something good in itself, or productive of good, but that it manifests something *worthy* and *respectable* in the performer. We conceive that both the object and motive are as they should be. The idea attatched to *Vice*, is that of an act pernicious in its tendency, performed by one who is under *base* and *unworthy*, or *unlawful* motives. These ideas are intimately connected with those of virtue and vice; even in such cases where we may mistake the character of the act; and thus apply the word in the most improper manner. When our conceptions of the character of an act, or of the motives are erroneous, we shall blame, when we ought to approve, and praise, when we ought to censure; yet whatever we censure partakes of the nature of vice, in our opinion at the instant, and the agent is criminated; whatever we praise, we deem to be a virtue,

and the agent is applauded. From a contrariety of opinions, concerning the nature and tendency of particular actions, it may happen that exalted honours shall be conferred by some, on persons whose conduct others may execrate, as deserving disgrace. Private interests, contracted views, a party spirit, or national contests, excite the most opposite sensations, and call forth the loudest exclamations, either of encomium or inventive, according to the influence which particular modes of conduct, may have upon the principles and interests of the individual, his party, or his country. These facts are too frequently illustrated, by the ferments excited between different nations, or among the same people, in their contests about religion or politicks, or in the election of magistrates, &c. But still, in every instance of this kind, the abstract ideas of good and evil, of virtue and vice, concerning their intrinsic natures, are precisely the same. Whatever we censure, we consider it as an evil, which ought not to have been committed; whatever we approve and commend, it is under the idea of a good, intentionally performed, that is, as a virtue. *

Hence it proceeds, that the same act shall appear in different points of view, not only to inter-

* Note C.

ested or prejudiced persons, but to the eye of reason itself, according to its consequences, and the intention with which it was performed. To deprive an individual of his life, to annihilate at once his present existence, with all its connextions, and relations, and influences, will always be repugnant to the feelings of the humane; but the act will sometimes be considered as innocent, sometimes approved as necessary and laudable; at others, condemned as the effect of a culpable carelessness; and at others, it is abhorred as a murder.

The distinctions made between *physical* good and evil, in which there is no imputation of virtue or vice, and those actions and dispositions of intelligent beings, which are deemed *moral* or *immoral*; and also the difference which we make in the nature of the same simple act, according to the object and motives of the agent, are manifestly founded in the power and exercise of *Volition*. As every intelligent agent is a *voluntary* agent, according to the statement we have given of the nature of volition; as he possesses the physical power to act as he *wills*, and to walk in the paths of virtue or of vice, according to the determinations of his own mind, we naturally form an *opinion* of his dispositions and character, according to the general tenor of his conduct, and the influ-

ence of worthy or unworthy motives; and we mark the gradations of his good and bad qualities, by the degrees of his disposition and efforts to promote good or diffuse evil. †

That we are so formed as to be disposed to *love*, whatever administers to our happiness, and to have an *aversion* to its contrary, in cases where the power of volition is not exerted, is a truth, which every one admits; and which has frequently presented itself in the course of our investigations. The diamond does not voluntarily glitter in order to charm us, nor gold render itself costly in consideration of our benefit; yet we admire the beauties of the one, and are eager to possess the other. There is no criminal disposition in nauseous medicines, to render themselves disagreeable to the taste, and yet they are loathed. The qualities which appear calculated to promote our pleasure, convenience, or happiness, attract our regards; we are disposed to love and cherish them: Whatever appears to be displeasing or pernicious, easily excites our displacency or abhorrence. But when we contemplate the qualities and dispositions of those who have the *powers of Self-command*; whose physical constitution is not crea-

† See many particulars illustrative of these remarks in Phil. Treatise Part ii. Ch. iii. § 3. Influence of Passions and Affections on Character.

ted with immutable qualities, of a beneficial or injurious tendency; when that which we deem to be good or bad in them, appears to be *self-created*, we superadd to our attractions or repugnancies, certain *Opinions* respecting the agent himself. With that love or hatred we are naturally disposed to indulge, towards qualities obviously good or bad, are connected ideas of *honour* or *disgrace;* and sentiments of *approbation* or *censure, applause* or *condemnation,* as often as such qualities are discovered to exist, in rational and voluntary agents. The exercise of our reasoning powers concerning them, is always accompanied with some *sensation.* An *affection* is excited; a mental *feeling,* of a pleasant or disagreeable nature, accompanies the decisions of the understanding. The actions and dispositions which we pronounce to be good, excite the pleasing sensations of respect, esteem, veneration, gratitude, admiration, according to the various degrees of excellency. We begin to entertain a *love* for the agent. In our *hearts,* as well as in our *judgment,* we give him the preference to every one who has not signalized himself in a similar manner. Actions which reason pronounces to be improper, absurd, atrocious, excite the disapprobation of our minds. Some peculiar sensations either of irrision, anger, contempt, in-

dignation, according to the apparent prevalence of folly or of moral turpitude*.

Applause and censure are open expressions of these peculiar sensations. They are designed indications of these mental feelings; and they are calculated to produce correspondent effects upon the feelings of the agent. The social nature of man, will not permit him to be indifferent, concerning the sentiments of those around him. We are pleased with the esteem which any particular mode of conduct may attract; and we consider contempt as a most painful and humiliating punishment. These principles operate so powerfully in the human breast, that nnmbers have encountered the most arduous enterprises, exposed themselves to imminent dangers; endured innumerable hardships; solely for the reward of popular applause. Many have sought even death itself, in order to be entitled to a posthumous fame, of which they expect not to be conscious; and others have violated their best principles, have opposed their judgments, and their natural dispositions, rather than suffer the pangs of disgrace.

The determinations of the mind, proceeding from the prevalent thoughts and suggestions of the mind itself, are sure indications of what pass-

* See Phil. Tr. p. 170. passim.

es *within*. They always discover the particular disposition of the moment. When motives of a similar nature repeatedly produce similar acts, in situations that are similar, we learn to form an accurate judgment, concerning habitual character, We know as decidedly, that it is not in the nature of a bad man, uniformly to act virtuously, or of a virtuous man, habitually to commit vicious actions, as that the quality of a stream must correspond with that of its source; and of the fruit to the nature and quality of the tree. Incidental circumstances may, in each case, produce incidental effects, in contrariety with the usual train of things; but it is according to the usual train that we form our judgments.

We have remarked, that these impressions are more or less vivid and lasting, according to the various degrees, and even shades of difference in the nature of particular actions, and the dispositions of the agent. We approve or applaud, in proportion to our perception, that the act was beneficial, and the motive dignified and liberal. We blame, or severely condemn, in proportion as we discover that the vice was productive of mischief, and the motive was unworthy and base. Thus for example, although ignorance be always dangerous, and may be the source of innumerable evils, yet the ignorance that was inevitable, is

deemed void of culpability. But the ignorance which proceeds from indolence, inattention, or wilful neglect, is a just subject of reproach. The love of knowledge is always commended, because it is aiming at a qualification to be useful. The right use of knowledge, which constitutes *wisdom*, is still more commendable, as its object is to produce those effects, which alone can give importance to knowledge. The improper use of knowledge is folly; because it is wasting a valuable treasure to injurious or trifling purposes. Personal prudence naturally meets with our approbation; we commend those who act according to the dictates of wisdom in their own concerns, and seek to promote their own welfare; yet, as the benefit or injury is confined to the agent, we rather pity the folly of those, who are enemies to their own interests, than feel very painful resentments; unless the intimacy of our connexions should excite these sensations. Justice is so essential to the welfare, and even to the existence of society, that we expect it from all men. It is an indication that the morals of a community are deeply depraved, when simple acts of justice meet with high applause; and we are lavish of every opprobrious epithet, whenever we perceive atrocious violations of the principles of justice.

Nothing can evidence the universal estimation in which this virtue is held, more, than the attempts which are incessantly made by wicked men, to avoid the disgrace of detection. The most depraved are necessitated to have recourse to every subterfuge, in order to support a character for honesty and integrity. Even those, who possess the power of acting, to the full extent of their purpose, shudder at the idea of meeting the public eye, under the avowed character of unjust, tyrannical, oppressive and cruel. Princes and potentates, before they invade the territories of their innocent and peaceful neighbours, think it prudent to publish manifestoes replete with arguments to justify their conduct.

The principles of justice are revered by those associations that subsist by violating its laws. Banditti and Robbers of every denomination, are compelled to obey the dictates of justice, in the division of their spoils, or their nefarious compact would dissolve itself. We cannot listen to the quarrels and altercations, of the most rude and uncultivated minds, without being struck with the encomiums they pay to the virtues of justice, veracity, honesty, and chastity; when they mutually upbraid each other with violating their dictates. Each erects himself into a censor of the conduct of his opponent; manifests an inward

respect for virtue, by the severity of his reproaches at the gross deviations of his antagonist; and where there is too strong an evidence of criminality, to permit an absolute denial, both parties eagerly collect and exaggerate the faults of their accusers; that upon a comparison, they may appear the least culpable, either in the quantity or quality of guilt.

But although each individual act of injustice be reprobated, more than its opposite virtue is applauded, yet so numerous are the opportunities of transgressing the boundaries of strict equity, with apparent security; so great may those advantages appear, which will be derived from some species of fraud, arising from our superior knowledge; so multiplied, in a commercial state, are the temptations to enrich ourselves, at the expense of another; so prone are we to mistake the permissions of our imperfect laws, for the dictates of equity; that strict honesty acquires a great respectability of character: and high integrity manifested in every transaction, receives the most exalted commendations. The acts in which oppression, malice, cruelty, are connected with injustice, are held in the greatest abhorrence, and excite the warmest indignation against the perpetrator.

What has been advanced concerning *Benevo-*

lence, shows its superiority to every other virtue. A disposition to augment the stock of well-being, among those around us, far exceeds the resolution not to sap or plunder it. The philanthropist that makes exertions for the good of others, without ostentation, or the expectation of being remunerated, manifests a disposition approaching to divine. The self denial that is voluntarily practised in order to be beneficent, compassionate, or merciful; the dangers to which humane persons instinctively, as it were, expose themselves in order to rescue others from destruction; are such distinguished marks of an exalted virtue, as to excite universal admiration. Contracted or timid minds will not be able to imitate, but they will join their voices to the exclamations of those, who have been protected or blessed by such acts of distinguished beneficence.

The same accuracy of discrimination, is observable in the slighter instances of benevolence which characterize *Discretion.* This, manifesting a delicate attention to the state and welfare of another, more than the dictates of justice absolutely demand, is deemed a virtue highly commendable. A discreet person always attracts esteem and confidence. Slight indiscretions, which are the result of inexperience, or the volatile thoughtlessness of youth, and free from the impu-

tation of design, are readily pardoned; but such indiscretions will not be frequently repeated, without relinquishing a claim to indulgence, and incurring severe reprehension. A person remarkable for his indiscretions, is avoided as a dangerous member of society; for although he may not intend mischief, he becomes the culpable cause of it.

Thus do the opinions and feelings of mankind, upon the subject of virtue and vice, manifestly consist of four gradations, with shades of difference in each. They condemn as a weakness or a folly, the improper conduct which is in any respect injurious to the agent alone; and they approve or applaud, in proportion as he wisely consults his own welfare. They commend discretion, and blame indiscretions, according to the obvious degrees of caution on the one hand, or of culpable inattention on the other. They applaud or censure with greater warmth, those acts which indicate the design of the agent to perform something beneficial to another, or which is conducive to his injury. They reprobate those actions which are unjust respecting others, however beneficial they may prove to the perpetrator, though the obvious design was not to injure them, but to serve himself. They hold in higher indignation

and abhorrence, the deeds of injustice which are the result of cruelty; or where absolute evil to the subject was intended. For in these cases, they know that the heart is radically depraved, and under the government of the most malignant passions. They duly appreciate every act of justice, according to its degrees of worth; but they *admire* benevolence; and its most exalted exertions call forth enthusiastic acclamations of *praise* *.

SECT. III.

ON THE MERIT AND DEMERIT ATTRIBUTED TO DISPOSITIONS AND ACTIONS.

IN the preceding Section we confined our remarks, to the sensations excited in the breast of the observer, when he attends to the subject of Virtue and Vice in particular actions: But he does not simply applaud or censure, when he forms distinct ideas of the moral nature of the action, as good or bad, right or wrong: he forms equally distinct ideas also of *merit*, or *demerit*, in the agent. We cheerfully acknowledge that the person who

* See Note D.

possesses an amiable character, or performs actions of which reason highly approves, acquires a title to our love, respect, gratitude, &c.; and we deem him worthy of some *recompense*; according to his situation, exigencies, and the degrees of moral excellence he may have acquired. We hold it perfectly consistent with justice and propriety, that the man whose conduct is in every respect prudent and circumspect, should escape the evils to which the imprudent are hourly exposed, and enjoy the fruits of all his virtuous exertions; and we maintain, that he, who in all his transactions, is strictly just and upright, is entitled to a perfect exemption from the injustice and oppression of others. To him who labours for the good of mankind, a feeling of gratitude induces us to wish an exemption from evil, and a participation of that happiness he is so desirous to promote. We admit, without hesitation, that no one can be more entitled to the enjoyment of the good, than the man who delights to do good; and we resent the calamities that may befal him. But we feel very different sensations when we reflect upon a vicious character. This inspires displacency or contempt, and excites anger; and anger, however it may be subject to mistakes, always supposes *demerit*, which deserves a due degree of chastise-

ment; and it often implants an impetuous desire to become ourselves the avengers. We judge it equitable that the person who, designedly or wantonly, induces distress upon others, should himself experience the feelings of misery. If benevolence at any time soften our resentment; or humanity view his distressed and abject state with sentiments of pity; we exclaim, "it is more than he deserves;" and we are disposed to congratulate ourselves, on the triumph of more exalted principles over the severity of justice.

Thus, in addition to the applause and censure we may bestow, we think it just that the agent should enjoy good or suffer evil, arising from the nature of his conduct; and though the opinions formed by his associates, respecting his character and deserts, may constitute a part of his reward or punishment, by the pleasing or displeasing impressions made upon his mind, these are never deemed the sole, or adequate returns. Our ideas are always directed to rewards or sufferings, that may more essentially influence his state of well-being.

As our sensations are in various degrees, according to apparent degrees of excellency or depravity in character and conduct, thus do we, in like manner, form different ideas of the nature and

gradations of *merit,* or *demerit,* according as the conduct and dispositions of the individual, appear to be founded upon the most exalted principles of action, or are perceived to be of an inferior kind. Merit and demerit may therefore be considered in three distinct points of view; as *absolute, comparative,* and *conditional*; with various gradations under each.

Absolute merit, relates to the disposition and conduct, which are uniformly regulated by a strong predilection for what is good and excellent in itself; which are always conformable to right principle, and under the direction of the best motives. To persons of this character we always award, to the full extent of good to which they are entitled, or the excellency of their conduct has a tendency to produce. Absolute demerit, on the contrary, results from the total predominance of a narrow selfishness; and prompts to the most nefarious acts, regardless of the interests, feelings, or rights of others; and no one can desire that such characters should enjoy the recompense due to exalted virtue.

Comparative merit, or *demerit,* relates to the favourable or unfavourable ideas, we form of one person, when compared with another, respecting some kind of superiority or deficiency; when ad-

vantages and opportunities may have been equal. We place the two characters in opposite scales; and without expecting that the one character should be perfect, and the other entirely worthless, we form our opinions, and make our decisions, according to the preponderance of good, or of bad, in either scale.

Conditional merit, and *demerit,* respects the performance of certain actions, in conformity to the injunctions of some one who stipulates the conditions. A promise is made to recompense certain services, with some particular remuneration; or a threatening is denounced against the omission. The man who conforms to the injunction, is entitled, by virtue of the promise, to the reward proposed; and he has reason to expect the punishment denounced against neglect. The reward may, from the liberality of the principal, far exceed the nature of the duty; yet according to the spirit of the compact, the performance confers a right to claim it; and the non-performance confers a right to the party, who has enjoined the service, to inflict the stipulated punishment. In these cases we observe that a person *deserves* the reward, for he has complied with the terms proposed; or, that he has incurred the penalty by his own neglect.

This species of desert has no necessary connection with that of the absolute kind. It may oppose every other virtue, but the apparent one of personal prudence. The injunction may be capricious; it may be unlawful; but a compliance entitles the agent to the reward; and the imposer would be deemed guilty of an atrocious injustice, were he to enjoy the advantage, and withhold the stipulated compensation. But when the action is in itself innocent, the merit of the agent resolves itself into personal prudence; into an attention to private interest. It is of consequence contemplated with the lowest degree of approbation; and the omission would be censured as an imprudence.

In all the above cases, some kind of *desert*, presents itself to the mind. In the first, that which is due to moral excellence, or moral depravity, is the most conspicuous; and our praise or censure becomes the warmest, or most poignant. In the second, moral excellences or depravities present themselves to the eye as standards, by which we measure and appreciate diversities in characters; without the expectation to discover either the one or the other, to an eminent degree. In the last, they are the least apparent, and perhaps do not exist *.

* See Note E.

The above principles naturally present them selves to a thinking mind, and all laws are founded upon them; as will appear in the following chapter.

CHAP. II.

CONCERNING THE LAWS OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

SECT. I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT; DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VIRTUE AND MORALITY.

HAVING thus inquired into the opinions and feelings of mankind, upon the subject of Virtue and Vice, we shall now proceed to examine upon what principles they are founded.

With the approbation or censure, arising from a perception of merit or demerit, are intimately connected our ideas of *Duty* and *Obligation;* of a something which *ought,* or ought *not,* to be done. *Obligation* properly signifies being bound to perform particular actions, or to avoid something prohibited. *Duty* respects that species of obligation which is due to another; and implies a conformity to his injunctions, or his interests. Thus, if there were not some kind of obligation,

there could be no right of requisition from another, nor place for censure. Proper conduct would simply produce its advantages without approbation; omissions and aggressions might be lamented, but no one could be blamed.

Obligation relates to some principle, or principles, which are considered as laws that are to be obeyed; according to which certain actions are to be performed, certain dispositions to be cherished, and others to be avoided. In common and familiar usage, the word has various applications; some of which are more pertinent than others. It may simply imply what is *necessary* to be done, in order to obtain a certain end. Thus, we say, "the man who is *obliged* to earn his own bread will be *obliged* to work." Sometimes it expresses a due sense of propriety, in conforming to certain received and approved principles. Thus, we say, "I was obliged to act as I did from a principle of honour, a sense of shame, or of gratitude." It frequently respects *obedience* or conformity to the commands of another; in which connexion it assumes the character of *duty*. In all these instances it is admitted, that something must be done, either as necessary to obtain a particular end, or not to violate some respected principle, or to avoid the ill consequences of disobedience. All human laws are obligatory upon the

subject; that is, he is bound as a member of the society to which he belongs, to act conformably to its injunctions, and rules. The laws by which it becomes obligatory to practise virtue, and desist from vice, are denominated *moral laws*, or *laws of moral obligation*. These now demand our attention.

The propriety of this denomination will appear, from what has been remarked, in our Introduction to the work before us*. It was observed, that under *morals*, were originally comprehended, habits, manners, customs, without an immediate reference to virtue. The term was afterwards applied to virtuous conduct;—and with peculiar propriety; for if manners and habits had a certain degree of influence, in the minuter concerns of social intercourse, when these *mores, manners*, and *habits*, assumed a *virtuous* character, they became still more important to society: since it is upon the practice of all the moral virtues, that the welfare, and even the existence, of society depends. In each acceptance of the word *mores*, both as *customs* and *morals*, the term is of a relative nature: it respects our commerce wi h the world; the manner in which we conduct ourselves

* See Ethical Treatise, Part I.

towards others, or are treated by them; and it belongs to all our social acts. But in these senses the word is not applicable to an individual, considered as in an isolated state. If his actions had no influence on society, he might be prudent or imprudent, but not moral or immoral, according to the spirit of the term. Suppose that he made the laws of heaven the rule of his conduct, obedience would be an act of *religion*, and not of *morality*. Gratitude, patience, submission, resignation, would constitute him a pious, not a *moral* man, according to the appropriate signification of the word. These considerations induced us to make the distinctions inserted in our Preliminary Observations *. It must, however, be observed, that in a state of society, personal virtues and vices, have always an immediate, or remote influence, of a social or relative nature; in consequence of which, every private vice partakes of an immorality, and every private virtue has a moral effect. It is, for example, scarcely possible for an intemperate or an indolent man, to injure himself alone; and, as the phrase is, to be "nobody's enemy but his own." For should he not have dependents to suffer by his vices, his *example* may prove injurious. As contentment, patience, resignation,

* See Introduction to the Second Volume.

are respectable, thus are they exemplary virtues, and they often shame others into an imitation; while the contrary vices of di-content and impatience, are discovered by a peevishness of temper, irksome and distressing to every associate. Thus, they cannot be separated in a practical point of view, but they still remain distinct ideas; and an attention to these, is of great importance in philosophical investigations.

In all laws, human and divine, three points, or distinct peculiarities, are observable:—the *object* for which the law was instituted;—the *manner* in which it is to be observed, or the rules prescribed for the regulation of conduct, that the object may be obtained;—and the *inducements* to obey. In all laws, human and divine, the object is to produce and insure some species of good; and to this the subordinate parts are directed, as means to obtain an end. This is the grand inducement to the enacting of all laws, even the most arbitrary and capricious. The despot seeks personal good, though he sacrifice the happiness of millions to obtain it. Good is obviously intended in those associations which promote slaughter, and devastation. Military laws are instituted to procure some essential benefits to the army, and ultimately to the cause it supports. They consist of cer-

tain regulations relative to discipline, by which the advantages derived from necessary subordination, skill, expedition, the accumulation and concentration of force, may be enjoyed; that a formidable power may be opposed to the enemy; either for personal security, the defence of one district, or the possession of another; and it is expected that a strict obedience to those rules will be procured, by conferring military honours on the worthy, and by the severe chastisement of offenders. The laws of war, as they are termed, consist of certain maxims of conduct, mutually received by the bellegerent powers, to mitigate as much as possible the horrors of war. The laws of civil society, profess to prevent violence, secure property, and maintain the public tranquility; and they contain certain maxims or rules of conduct, deemed subservient to these purposes. These they always enforce, by inflicting punishments on delinquents; for it is possible that no other remuneration can be awarded to the obedient, than their sharing in the general welfare. The laws of commerce, consist of certain positive injunctions, for a particular purpose, apparently beneficial; regulations apparently adapted to that purpose; encouragements, and penalties in order to enforce obedience. Every private society, has its specific object, its rules, to obtain the object, and inducements to

observe the rules. Thus, in every instance, the design is one, and the means are similar.

In the laws of morality, the same distinctions equally exist, but upon a larger, more important, and more comprehensive scale. The object, or the grand first principle of the law, is the diffusion of the greatest possible good; the subservients relate to those rules of conduct, by the observance of which alone, this great good can be secured; and certain considerations or inducements, are held forth to individual agents, that they may contribute all in their power, in every action of their lives, whether public or private, to the common fund of well-being. These laws belong to man, as man. They are not confined to particular communities, from which other communities are exempt; they extend to the whole human race, and each individual is interested in their operations.

It is the universal desire of all animated beings to *enjoy* their existence. Without *enjoyment*, life would not be a valuable gift. It is this desire which renders us solicitous to possess the *means* of enjoyment; and these we value so highly, as to give them the appellation of *good*, as well as the state of well-being, which we expect them to induce. The diversities of this good, within the reach of sensitive, intelligent, moral agents, have been am-

ply considered by us, in our Disquisition on the Nature and Sources of Well-being; and in our analytical View of the Passions, it was fully shown that some species of good to be enjoyed by ourselves, or communicated to others, is the parent of every wish, is a stimulus to every action, and is contained in every motive. It is the source of all our painful passions and affections. The most turbulent, as well as the most placid, acknowledge this for their exciting cause. Its influence is obvious in the most vicious, as well as the most virtuous dispositions; in the most frivolous, as well as the most important actions. We cannot imagine a plan to be formed, or an exertion to be made, where this principle is not to be considered as the spring perpetually operating, and directing all our movements.

Whoever believes in the existence of a great first cause, and ascribes to his almighty energy, the endowment of myriads of beings, with a susceptibility of agreeable impressions, from external objects, and with varied forms, powers, and instincts, properly adapted to the particular object pursued; whoever contemplates the nature of man, his corporeal and mental powers, the superior structure of the human frame, and its peculiar adaptation to an infinitude of movements;—the passions and affections of the mind, their specific

objects and final causes ;—whoever attends to the diversity of our intellectual faculties, and their peculiar adaptationto all the varieties and intricacies, with which our personal and social interests are so frequently connected ;—whoever meditates upon the various portions of good adapted to our sensitive, rational, social, and moral nature, must be convinced, that the promotion of good, in its different kinds and degrees, is the grand principle in the divine mind, presiding over his infinitely diversified creation ! The many troubles that surround us, the numerous circumstances that occasionally oppose, or retard the grand design, cannot obscure the facts, that all animated beings are rendered capable of enjoying much good, and that the means of much good are before them.

Our inquiries into the nature of virtue manifest to us, in what manner the choicest, and most permanent, good is to be obtained. The practice of virtue is a conformity to certain regulations, ordained by the supreme legislator, the observance of which is essential to human welfare : and the more perfect this conformity, the more effectually will the enjoyment of vitality, with its numerous blessings, be secured to us, from simple well-being to the most exalted state of happiness. We discover, by our investigations, the infinite importance of virtue, and are able to trace the manner in which virtuous dispositions and conduct secure

individual, and diffuse general good; and we are able to demonstrate that vice is in its own nature conducive to misery. All that is pleasing in vice is partial, selfish, transient. The small degree of enjoyment it communicates to the perpetrator, is always purchased by great diminutions of good, in some respect or other; and by the production of evil somewhere. It will be acknowledged, without a dissenting voice, that were all men entirely selfish, in every action of their lives; were they uniformly unjust, cruel, revengeful, the bonds of society would be dissolved. But if, on the other hand, the self-interest of every man were properly regulated, and retained within due bounds; if justice, with all its ramifications, were sacredly and inviolably observed; were compassion, always prompt to remove or alleviate incidental distress; were the fullest scope given to our intellectual faculties in discoveries and improvements adapted to our nature, and situation; were all the benevolent affections fully exercised in the performance of beneficent actions towards each other; this world would be a terrstrial paradise; and the present state of existence, an anticipation of future bliss. This being the case, he that wills human happiness, must enjoin the practice of virtue, as the only maens to obtain the important end. The rulesor laws of virtue are practical maxims to the produc-

tion of happiness; and they are efficacious to the minutest ramifications. The vicious are the disorderly members of a moral state: and were not the supreme governor more mild than his representatives, they would be immediately extirpated from the society they offend and insult.

It is to diffuse the greatest possible good, that the practice of virtue and laws of morality are rendered universal, absolute, immutable; that they are obligatory upon all persons, and in all places. The legislators of a province, or of an empire, enact laws, which are necessarily bounded in their object and operations. They may be accommodated to particular incidents and circumstances: they may be mutable: that conduct which yesterday was innocent, may to-day become a crime, against which the severest punishment is denounced; and tomorrow, it may be rewarded as a meritorious act. But the grand laws of morality, the injunctions to personal prudence in all its branches, to justice, veracity, integrity, to the practice of benevolence, being of permanent efficacy, are permanently obligatory. Imperfect governments may, either from ignorance, or partiality, or imbecility, connive at various offences committed against the state; or they may palliate crimes upon the plea of necessity or expediency; but divine wisdom discovers

no expediency in vice; nor admits of the carnival of a single day, for the indulgence of falsehood, profligacy, fraud, and cruelty.

As the enjoyment of good, is clearly the grand principle by which all our thoughts and desires are directed; as the promotion of good, is the grand object of the divine legislator, so it is, in order to augment and extend this good, that the uniform practice of virtue is enjoined upon mortals; and it was for this end, that we were rendered *moral agents*, by the great author of our existence.

We now perceive, that the laws of morality, are in themselves no other than an uniform series of virtues, enjoined upon us as the rule of conduct, for the universal benefit. This view of the subject presents us with the characteristic differences, between the ideas we affix to *Virtue* and *Morality*, *Vice* and *Immorality*. Virtue is the beneficial energy of an intelligent agent, which, by being rendered obligatory, for the benefit of mankind, comes under the denomination of a *law*. This is called the *moral* law, or a law of moral obligation; which, for the sake of conciseness, is expressed by the term *morality*; and its opposite is called *immorality*. It consists of two parts:—the one relates

to the act, the other to the obligation to perform it. As virtue and vice primarily respect some beneficial or pernicious energy, voluntarily exerted by intelligent agents; morality and immorality, suggest to the mind certain principles by which, the performance of the one is enjoined upon us, and the others strictly prohibited. They both respect the production of good or evil; and it is this common property which has, in some cases, created a confusion in our ideas, as if they were in all respects synonymous; although in fact *virtue* relates to the *operative*; *morality* to the *injunctive*, or *obligatory principle* of conduct. Virtue, abstractedly considered, consists of efficacious means to obtain important ends. When the use of these means is rendered obligatory, the application of them is a *moral* act. The terms may be frequently used, promiscuously, with great propriety; for that which we deem to be *vicious*, when considered as a pernicious energy designedly exerted, is considered as *immoral* when we advert to the laws which are violated. But, whenever precision becomes important, an attention to existing differences becomes absolutely necessary.

The different modes of speech which are observed in some connections, give validity to these

remarks. We often talk of the *love of virtue*, but never of the *love of morality*; because absolute production of obvious good, is more immediately the object of our affection, than the law which enjoins it. We never substitute *virtuous* obligation for *moral* obligation; the primary idea of the word virtue being directed to the beneficial act or disposition, and that of morality to a law and a sense of duty. Hence we speak of *moral* duties, and not virtuons duties.

In every species of virtuous conduct, some determined exertion, implying a resistance to contrary propensities, is frequently practised. This peculiarity enters into the nature of virtue, and it manifests a self-command, a triumph over contrary inducements. Hence it is that we should perceive a great and irreverent impropriety, were any one to speak of the *virtues of Deity*; for the Deity cannot in any case, be supposed to combat his own inclinations, or make an effort to be good. But we mention, without hesitation, the *moral perfections* of Deity, because we acknowledge him to be invariably governed, in his conduct towards his creatures, by unerring rules of righteousness and goodness.

SECT. II.

ON MORAL SANCTIONS, OR THE INDUCEMENTS TO PRACTICE VIRTUE.

THE institution of laws necessarily implies, that the proposed end cannot be secured without them; and it also implies, that dispositions and habits of a contrary tendency, are to be opposed and subdued; which as necessarily requires some degree of coercion. But where physical coercion cannot be employed; where there are minds existing that have wills of their own; where obedience cannot be obtained, without giving a pliability to this will, bending or inclining it towards the desired object, the sole power of a legislator consists in placing certain inducements before the Subject, by which his will may be influenced to obey; the subject still retaining the power to disobey, if he choose to suffer the consequences of disobedience. These inducements are expected to act upon some principle, inherent in human nature; by exciting some particular desires, or favouring some particular disposition, which, if it existed before, might be too feeble to ensure a regular conformity. These are called *legal sanctions*, and

from their influence it is expected, that those rules and regulations should be observed, which are to produce the benefit proposed by instituting the law.

The sanction of all human laws, applies to the immediate interest of the Subject. It announces a something which is to operate upon his state of existence; rendering that more or less happy; or, in other words, it excites in the obedient the expectation of some recompense, and threatens the disobedient with chastisement. Thus human sanctions solely operate upon the passions of hope and fear. Nor do they expect that subjects in general should be influenced by any other motives. The recompense consists either of some pecuniary reward, increase of property, or accumulation of wealth; and these relate to the augmentation of such means of good, as may be employed, by the recipient at his option: Or it holds forth some honourable mark of distinction, by which the meritorious individual is elevated above the multitude; and exhibited as peculiarly worthy of their esteem and applause; this applies to the social principle of our nature, which is delighted with tokens of complacency from our associates: Or by a promotion to dignity and power; which not only are honourable distinctions, but give a permanent authority and influence in society, highly

gratifying to the ambitious. The punishments are mulcts and fines; corporal sufferings; privation of liberty; public marks of disgrace, by which the enjoyment of life is greatly diminished, or destroyed; and finally, by the extinction of life itself. Such are the modes by which human institutions and human legislators, attempt to subdue every reluctance to obey their mandates, or determine the will to a conformity to their precepts.

The various duties of morality, are of greater extent than any of those injunctions rendered obligatory, by human legislation. They are not confined to a few objects, but they relate to every purpose which interests individuals or societies in every state, and in every stage of their existence. They are obligatory upon the whole human race, in the characters of conscious intelligent agents; as searchers after well-being; and associated with others, who are incessantly engaged in the same pursuit: and they are expected to extend their influence to another state of existence, when all sublunary associations and governments shall be for ever abolished.

These important peculiarities suggest to us the very interesting questions, what are the inducements laid before all mankind, which ought to operate as motives, determining the will to practice every virtue, and discharge every moral duty? What

principles within us are favourable to the practice of virtue, and are violated by disobedience? and what will be the consequences resulting from these opposite modes of conduct?

The continuation of our moral history may perhaps throw considerable light upon these questions. We shall therefore first enquire, what do human beings expect from each other as rational and moral agents? What do they consider as the proper motives of action in general; a conformity or nonconformity to which, constitutes, in their opinion, various degrees of merit or demerit; and entitles the agent to approbation or censure? and how far are these applicable to moral conduct in particular?

We shall in the next place, take a comparative view of the various inducements, admitted to be legitimate motives to the practice of virtue, and examine which of these is most promising of efficacy; most correspondent with the nature, desires and expectations of men; the best security against the seductions of vice; and most conducive to personal well-being; in the discharge of those duties which have the general welfare for their object? The admitted inducements or legitimate motives to action, possess the following characters:

They are such as are most consistent with the best interests of the agent.

Such as are becoming a rational being.

Such as are adapted to the social nature of man.

Such as are most interesting to a cultivated mind.

Such as are enjoined by a superior who has a claim to obedience, and whose injunctions cannot, or ought not to be resisted.

1. SELF-INTEREST.

The desire of well-being is natural to every being that exists. To seek personal good, and avoid misery therefore, will be universally admitted to be a proper motive of action. We never reprehend the utmost efforts of well directed self-love. We never censure until the claims of others are invaded, or there is an indication of cold neglect respecting them. In such cases we feel a satisfaction at the disappointment of the

selfish. We advert with pleasure to that constitution in our nature, by which it is ordained that inordinate self-love shall defeat its own purpose; and that the man who sacrifices the social affections to private interest, must be a stranger to true happiness. But whoever should totally neglect an attention to his own welfare, would be considered as in a disordered state of mind, and excite our pity, not our approbation of his disinterestedness.

As the pursuit of well-being naturally implies the pursuit of the proper means, and the due use of the means when they are possessed; thus, if the cultivation and practice of virtue be most conducive to private happiness, we shall applaud him who is actuated by the principle of self-love, to prefer this road in his pursuit of good, to every other. We acknowledge, that, as virtue is productive of great personal benefits; as contentment, patience, resignation, augment the good and diminish the evils of life; as diligence opens new sources of welfare; as a subjugation of the turbulent passions, imparts a pleasing serenity to the mind, and escapes the evils attendant upon vice and folly; as inward peace is the companion of integrity; and as in acts of benevolence the heart glows with satisfaction, so, that man is wise, who endeavours from a principle of self interest,

to excel in all these virtues; while the vicious, experience that public ignominy accompanies the self reproach to which they are liable, by the absurd and depraved manner in which their self interest has been directed.

When virtue is practised from a principle of self-love, it is obvious that the rewards expected, are the natural consequences flowing from virtuous conduct and dispositions; and on the other hand, the natural consequences of vice contain its punishment.

II. RATIONAL CONDUCT.

It is certainly expected that rational beings should act rationally. It is the province of reason to discover the existence, nature, properties, relations, influence of things in general; to discern the best and the worst, in every state and situation; that we may be enabled to direct every power and property towards the grand object. It was for this purpose that we are endowed with all those intellectual faculties which have been minutely investigated. It is therefore most obvious, that we shall possess the intellectual faculties in vain, either if we neglect to exercise them, or act counter to the clear and decisive discoveries

they may have made. We possess these keen and penetrating powers, that we may discern the road to happiness, through the mists and intricacies that surround us; and when we have made the discovery, these very powers themselves, will pronounce a sentence of condemnation, as often as we neglect to profit by it.

If therefore it be a fact, that the virtues of prudence, discretion, justice, benevolence, are highly productive of good, and the only effectual guarantees against the various ills to which we are exposed; if it be a fact that imprudence, and every species of vice, are destructive to human happiness, we are compelled by the laws of reason, to love and practise virtue, and to hate and shun vice, as decidedly, as we are compelled by the law of nature, to love happiness and hate misery. It is the character of wisdom to apply knowledge to important uses; and utility always respects the production of some kind or degree of good. It is the character of folly, to make an improper application of the knowledge we may possess, by preferring trifles to interesting realities; by searching after happiness where she is never seated; and where of consequence she can never be found.

It is therefore deemed obligatory upon every rational being, that he act rationally; that is, that he pursue and promote the greatest possible good,

by the most proper means. By a virtuous conformity to the dictates of reason, man possesses, whilst he diffuses happiness. By acting irrationally, he is punished with the loss of that good which he might have obtained; reaps the pernicious consequences of his folly; loses the esteem of the wise and good; is placed in their opinion, below the common level of his species; and the report of his own consciousness informs him that he is not calumniated.

III. THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLE.

The social nature of man, not only multiplies his pursuits, his duties, and his claims, but constitutes a large portion of his sufferings and his enjoyments. It is here that some of the choicest affections are placed. It was formerly observed that the social principle extending to the state, conduct, and character of others, operates according to the nature and degrees of their connexions with us; according to their powers of communicating or receiving from us, either good or evil; according to their enjoyments or expectations, their sufferings or apprehensions; according to their occasional or habitual deportment, and to the degrees of merit or demerit attached to their

dispositions and conduct, as intelligent and moral agents.* Hence arise the offices of discretion, justice, liberality, compassion and mercy; the conjugal, parental, filial, fraternal, friendly, and benevolent affections. Here also are placed the complacential regards of esteem, respect, veneration, gratitude, admiration. It is from this source that we feel the pangs of envy, hatred, rancour, anger, resentment, and are exposed to irrision, contempt, and execration.†

These various connexions and relations, are greatly cemented by the mutual desire of being acceptable to each other; and by the dread of incurring displeasure. Hence it is that we seek the esteem and friendship of those, whose opinions we value, and to whom we are well affected; that we resent the injuries and neglects which are discordant to the sociability of our own tempers; and pour contempt upon those who, frequently or habitually, act inconsistent with the harmony of social intercourse. Such sentiments and dispositions naturally induce us to inquire, what kind of conduct will be most grateful to our associates,

* See Phil. Treat. p. 118. † See Ethic. T. Sect. iv. p. 316. Also No. ix. of Introduct. where the passions and affections, proceeding from the social nature of man are particularly considered.

or may incur their resentment; and we shall be assiduous to pursue the one and avoid the other. Success in our endeavours will inspire joy and satisfaction, a failure will vex and chagrin us. A conviction that we have exposed ourselves to their just censures, and that we are disgraced in their opinion, will excite the painful sensations of self displacency, confusion, and shame.

When the sentiments of the society with which we are connected, are perfectly conformable to reason; when they are favourable to every virtue; when its members know how to praise or censure, precisely where they ought; this natural desire of approbation and fear of reproach, will prove a powerful incitement to the practice of virtue; and the apprehensions of disgrace may suppress our propensity to the vices, which may be deemed indecorous and shameful, and even bring them into disrepute with ourselves.

The good opinion of others, united with the convictions of reason, and true conceptions of self-interest, will be highly favourable to the practice of justice in all its ramifications; will strengthen our endeavours to bear the evils of life, with a patient composure; animate our courage in the hour of danger; and may restrain our propensity to the ignominious vices of indo-

lence, ebriety, and lewdness; and thus may they finally induce the contrary habits.

If we consider mankind as one large family, and remark that the practice of virtue is, from the very nature of virtue, essentially necessary to the good of the whole; we shall perceive the reason, why, in every country, some degree of respect is paid to those actions which are deemed virtuous; and that acknowledged vices are covered with disgrace. Even the most depraved are disposed to revere the virtues, they are not disposed to practice; and will openly condemn the vices to which they may be secretly attatched. In such cases, the desire of public esteem will implant a disposition to conceal, as much as possible, the vicious propensities that are not eradicated; and to counterfeit the more ostensible or reputable virtues. It is true, by this duplicity of conduct, they expose themselves to ridicule and contempt upon detection; but they pay a tribute to the importance of virtue, and the powerful influence of public opinion, by being thus impelled to acts of hypocrisy, and the forfeiture of self-esteem.

The divisions and subdivisions of human societies, are marked by some particular principles, uniformly adopted by the respective members, and constituting their chief bond of union. To deviate from these principles is deemed a trans-

gression, and resented as a violation of the laws and rules of the society: it is considered as ignominious, and punished with disgrace. Where no other punishment is inflicted, conformity is expected from a *principle of honour*; and the forfeiture of this honour is punished with the most poignant contempt. The motive for conformity to this principle and its rules, is denominated a *sense of honour*. It induces the member to perform some actions and avoid others, from a regard to character. He courts the applause of the community. He often makes a thousand sacrifices to support his reputation, and sometimes fears the disgrace of his associates, more than the loss of life. When the laws of such societies are conformable to the purest principles of virtue, they will prove powerful auxiliaries to every other motive. The influence of good example is as encouraging, as bad example is seductive; and the harmony peculiar to virtuous associations, cherishes the love of virtue.

It is obvious that the motives to virtue, derived from the social principle, abstractedly considered, may be resolved into a modification of self-love. The disposition to recommend ourselves to others, by an attention to character, or the desire of applause, has self-love for the spring of action; but

it is a spring more refined and more pliable. It is connected with a love of the species, of which inordinate self-love is destitute; and thus it begins to withdraw the affections from within. Here we perceive a disposition to accommodate; in the other, to oppose. The suggestions of inordinate self-love are now suppressed. We disdain to monopolize when we are solicitous to please.

It is manifest, that the recompence expected from these motives, consists in receiving the applause and approbation of our associates; and the punishment of transgression, is censure and contempt.

IV. THE BENEVOLENT PRINCIPLE.

This principle, consisting in good-will towards others, manifested by a solicitude for their welfare, and a delight in their prosperity, must be highly favourable to the practice of all the social virtues. Sordid selfishness, that enemy to public felicity, is subdued. The beneficial disposition is in readiness. Nothing is wanting but powers, and wisdom to direct. Wherever the benevolent principle is duly operative, it is at once a most delicate, and a most efficacious motive to the practice of every social virtue. It not only avoids grosser

injuries, it enters into the minutiæ of discretion. It moves circumspectly, that it may tread upon no one, even by inadvertency. It feels pain at the utterance of a word that might prove displeasing to others; or at the suggestion of a thought that might operate to their prejudice. It considers strict justice as being scarcely entitled to merit; and the violation of justice, however secret and secure from censure, is most repugnant to its nature. It not only accommodates itself to the claims, but to the wants of others. It shapes its conduct, not according to what they have a right to expect, but to what they may require. It earnestly examines what evils it can remove; what afflictions it can soothe; from what dangers it can protect; what pleasures it can communicate. It cheerfully denies itself many indulgences, that others may rejoice in its bounty. It encounters many difficulties, to extricate those who are involved in greater. Benevolence is the animated and active principle of love; directing its benign influence over every created being, that is endowed with the power of sensation. It loves every species of virtue, because it perceives that virtue is conducive to happiness: It hates vice more than common venom, because of its more baneful effects.

We have already stated, that, as the extent of its influence cannot be equal to the wishes of a benevolent heart, as boundless good will cannot supply every exigency, it is compelled to select; and while some objects participate its bounty, others must remain destitute. This circumstance takes away the charge of culpable neglect, respecting particular omissions; and he whose dispositions and actions are directed by judgment and discrimination, is exempt from the penalty of censure or reproach, although his bounty should not extend to every indigent object. This wise use of a discretionary power is one cause, why each particular act of beneficence is in higher estimation than those of simple justice; why it excites admiration in the spectator, and the warmest gratitude in the participant. There are also more gradations in the exercise of this virtue, than in any other. Those acts of benevolence in which the selfish principle is most suppressed, in which compassion triumphs over apprehensions for personal safety, and mercy over the claims of rigid justice, or a spirit of resentment, are the most admired and extolled.

It is a great peculiarity in this principle of action, that we agree to consider the merit the greater, because the immediate obligation is the least. Admitting, that the laws of social intercourse de-

mand, not only that we should be just, but that we should be kind to each other, yet as they do not prescribe any specific rules, respecting either the object or the degrees of our exertion, these can alone be arranged by the nicer discernments of the intellect, and the genuine benevolence of the heart; and where the former discriminates well, and the other cheerfully excites to exertions and sacrifices, far beyond the demands of justice, we perceive the operation of a much superior principle. We applaud generous actions with peculiar emphasis, because they might have been omitted without the penalty of disgrace. We reward with those choice affections, love, gratitude, and admiration, the man who would not have been exposed to censure, had he not thus soared above the usual level of humanity. Benevolence has also the choicest rewards arising from within; those of joy, satisfaction, and self-complacence. The man whose whole deportment is strictly just, will add to the esteem and approbation of others, a certain degree of self-esteem, from the consciousness of his integrity; but in proportion to strenuous exertions and sacrifices, made for the promotion of happiness, will be the glow of self-complacence in the attempt, and of joy in the successful issue. A triple recompence thus attends successful beneficence. It participates in the hap-

piness of the object assisted; secures the approbation and respect of the worthy, sometimes to a great degree of admiration and love; and enjoys self-complacence from the superior character of its motives. The benevolent man reflects upon a deed of humanity with the greater delight, because he knows the good of the *sufferer*, and not *his own*, was predominant at the time; and the more *disinterested* the motive, the greater will be the recompence of self-complacence upon reflection.

The direct opposite to benevolence, is a spirit of malevolence in its designs, in its character, and in its sensations. Its designs are to inflict misery; its character is despicable; and its sensations are tormenting. There is some degree of pleasure attending the gratifying of every passion; with the exception of fear, which has no gratifications, and is absolute unqualified misery. But a malevolent temper can only enjoy momentary flashes of triumph, upon the success of some mischievous purpose, or the gratification of revenge; and these momentary flashes leave the mind in darkness and misery; dissatisfied with itself, corroded with envy and rancour, and probably stung with remorse. It is happy for mankind, that the self-tormenting nature of malevolence, is a kind of check upon its indulgence. Were there greater pleasures in the

indulgence, it would be guilty of more extensive mischiefs; while benevolence is formed, in its own nature, for the widest expansion; and the more it is expanded, the more it is enjoyed by the individual bosom in which it dwells *.

V. THE BEAUTY AND EXCELLENCE OF VIRTUE.

We have had frequent occasion to observe, that our strongest attachment to many objects, is, at first, inspired by our considering them as the means and instruments of well-being; and from their having answered this desirable purpose, in particular instances, we finally place our affections upon them. Pleasing emotions are excited by the view of what has been beneficial; as we feel a repugnance at the sight of whatever can inflict an injury. The latent power of even inanimate objects to produce good, suggests pleasing, we had almost said *grateful* ideas. Hence that universal attachment to gold, or any other representative of wealth; and of wealth in all its forms. We know their powers to furnish a thousand pleasures and accommodations to the possessor, according to the nature of his wants, or the sugges-

* See Phil. Treat. art. Hatred, p. 29, passim

tions of his fancy. Our insatiable desires after happiness induce us to rejoice in an overflow of the means; and, although we may not be able to enjoy the whole, of whatever these means may be able to provide, we rest satisfied in the command we may have over them, according to the dictates of our own volition. These properties stamp such an intrinsic value upon them, in our estimation, that they become the objects of our *affection*, unconnected with any immediate design to render them efficient; and this has induced many philosophers to suppose, that we love some objects for their own sakes, independently of any benefit to be expected from them *.

Again, contemplative minds enjoy a satisfaction, in tracing the various kinds of relation which one thing may bear to another; in perceiving every species of adaptation in means to specific ends; and in contemplating plans and designs accommodated to particular purposes; although they may not have an interest in their efficiency. We love every thing which appears harmonious and graceful; and we are powerfully attracted by those objects, which are able to excite pleasing emotions within us. It is the gratification arising from the above sources, which constitutes the

* See Vol. I. Note E.

pleasure of the mathematician, the mechanic, the philosopher, the poet; of artists in every department; and excites admiration in the breast of every one, in whom judgment and taste are united.

Thus the man who contemplates virtue, as the means of happiness, will be struck with its superior adaptations, and transcendent excellencies. When he meditates upon the good it secures to the agent; the good it confers upon others; the order, regularity, and harmony, that preside in societies which conform to its dictates; the horrors suffered by the perpetrators of vice; the wretchedness they spread over a community; if every spark of virtue be not extinguished within his own breast, he will most cordially approve of the one, and condemn the other. In proportion as his own virtuous habits and propensities become strong and vigorous, will he be charmed with the beauty of virtue. He will turn from the deformity of vice, with disgust and detestation. These virtuous and moral sensations will themselves communicate such refined and exalted pleasure in the contemplator, that he may finally love virtue from a clear perception of its intrinsic worth. He may contemplate it with pleasure as performed by others,

without its immediate agency being beneficial to himself.

Such is the native excellence of virtue; so respectable is every indication of beneficial influence, or beneficial intentions, proceeding from a voluntary agent; so interesting in itself; so consonant with reason; so essential to human happiness; that it is impossible not to love it, when it does not prohibit some favourite passion or pursuit. All men honour virtue. All men detest the vices of others, with whom they are not in a league. All men value the smallest particle of virtue, which they may chance to discover in their own breasts; and they are eager to steal a colouring from the proximate virtue, to adorn the vice to which they are addicted. The pleasure derived from the most striking events of history, from fictitious scenes described in works of imagination, or exhibited on the stage, prove that the general suffrage is in favour of virtue. We may *laugh* at the wit which is connected with vicious ideas, but we never *approve*. The warmth of applause is always reserved for the triumphs of virtue. We are anxious for those, whose virtuous principles are exposed to severe and dangerous conflicts; we lament if they yield, and exult in their victories. We rejoice when villany is caught in its own

snares; and we retire gratified, when the curtain falls, on the just vengeance inflicted upon a monster.

These are indications of an inward and deep respect for virtue, which may exist in the breasts of those who are prevented, by habits of depravity, from the practice of it. How congenial therefore must it be to the minds of those who have been habituated to the practice of virtue! Who feel its benignant influence in their own conduct; and who are witnesses to the peace, order, harmony, and joy, diffused, according to the sphere of its influence! To the pleasures arising from the approving decisions of his judgment, from personal advantages in the course of a virtuous conduct, from the esteem of the worthy, from a heart glowing with benevolence; the man of confirmed virtue, adds the pleasures derived from a refined and exalted *taste*. He admires the *beauty* of right conduct. The symmetry derived from well-ordered affections, is far more interesting to him, than that of forms painted on the canvas, or chiseled out in marble. The voice of harmony, arising from the chearfulness of virtuous innocence, delights his ear more than all the melodies of music. The grandeur of virtue rising superior to every misfortune or seduction, constitutes, with

him, the *true sublime*; and excites in his breast, the elevated emotions of admiration and delight, to a much higher degree, than can be produced by the majesty of Nature itself!

VI. POSITIVE INJUNCTIONS.

The principles we expect to operate as motives to action, and peculiarly appropriate to virtuous actions, which we have hitherto mentioned, originate from the nature and constitution of man, in his individual and social capacity. The rewards of right action are various species of good, which naturally arise from prudent, rational, equitable, benevolent conduct, and the inward satisfaction which accompanies such conduct. The punishment ensuing from opposite conduct, consists in a loss of some good; exposure to evil; censure from others; and self-disapprobation. These principles, observed or violated, are considered as laws of conduct. Thus, we speak of the law of prudence, the law of reason, the laws of society, of humanity, &c. These are deemed obligatory upon all mankind. We are bound to act conformably to them, or we forfeit our title to prudence, rationality, integrity, and humanity.

But there are other motives of conduct, and accasionally of virtuous conduct, in which the idea of *law* and *obligation* is much more obvious; and in some of which, care is taken to render the penalties as formidable as possible. To these a reference was made at the commencement of the present Chapter. These laws and injunctions may consist of certain rules and ordinances of our own; or they may be instituted by an authority we cannot, or ought not to resist.

Men, in their social character, and engaged in the complicated concerns of life, may agree to conform to certain regulations of their own appointment, which are enforced by various penalties threatened to the disobedient. These laws may not always have the practice of every virtue for their primary object. They may relate to certain conveniencies, or some local or partial utility; and the only virtue they require may consist in strict attention and obedience to the rules. The laws of states and civil communities, aim at the protection of person and property, from secret injury or open violence. Thus far they lend their aid to the other inducements to practise the virtue of justice; and they may be powerful restraints from many vices, to which the impetuous passions and depraved desires of men might impel them.

It is a peculiarity attendant upon human laws, that their sanctions chiefly operate upon the fears of men. In those which relate to the political œconomy of a country, *Hope* has, with a few exceptions, simply a reference to advantages to be enjoyed in common; such as the security of life and property; a general encouragement to traffic; exemptions from the burdens of particular requisitions, &c. Fear is chiefly personal. It has for its exciting cause, some evil menaced to offending individuals exclusively. The leading idea of Obligation is closely connected with the painful sensation of dread; and the magnitude of the offence is thus measured by the magnitude of the punishment. Among these punishments, disgrace and ignominy are constant attendants. In a country where a depravity of manners is prevalent, the mind is rendered familiar to many misdemeanors, from the force of evil example; but when the offender is singled out as a greater delinquent than any of his associates, when he stands alone as a criminal, he is exposed to the gaze and censure of the public at large; and the punishment of shame and ignominy is felt as the severest part of the penalty.

The power of individuals to enjoin obedience, is exemplified in the connexion that subsists between parents and their offspring; tutors and pu-

pils; masters and servants; free men and slaves; and in the uncontrouled authority of a sovereign. In these instances, the rewards and penalties, annexed to obedience and disobedience, are of various kinds. Filial obedience is expected from a child to his parents, from the consideration that they are the sources of his existence, the immediate agents and promoters of his well-being. Hence it is, that many offences against precepts, which may not have the practice of any particular virtue for their immediate object, may become criminal acts. *Disobedience* is a crime. Obedience to parents has for its recompense, their affectionate approbation, occasional encouragements and indulgences, and all the advantages arising from wise and salutary injunctions. The penalties of disobedience, consist in the displeasure of their parents, the additional punishments they may think it proper to inflict, and the natural consequences arising from the perverse negligence of wise counsels.

Obedience and disobedience to preceptors, tutors, &c. are virtually the same as to parents, of whom these delegates are the representatives, and by whose authority they act. The connexion between a master and a servant, is, in a *free country*, wholely conditional. The terms stipulated mark the line of duty; the advantages resulting

from obedience, and the disadvantages of disobedience; to which may be added, what contributes much to the happiness or unhappiness of this state, the satisfaction or dissatisfaction expressed by the superior.

The authority of a free man over his slave, must be ultimately resolved into the right of the strongest. The idea of obligation, is chiefly connected with that of punishment for disobedience. The dread of severe chastisement, is the habitual incitement to strict obedience. The kind and liberal disposition of the master, has sometimes operated upon the more ingenuous affections; has inspired both gratitude and hope; and while it has softened the hardships of servitude, it has augmented fidelity, and animated to minute and unremitted obedience, seldom equalled by those whose service is conditional, not compulsive.

Similar to the power of a master over his slave, is the authority of a despotic monarch, whose will constitutes the law of his subjects, and who rules the state according to his sovereign pleasure. The profusion of rewards it is in his power to bestow, or the dreadful punishments he can inflict, without controul, strongly operate upon the hopes and fears of those subjected to his domination; and render them most obsequious to his will.

Religion. Still more important ideas respecting the will of a superior, are inspired by *religious opinions.*

It has been the prevailing sentiment of mankind, in every age, that a connexion subsists between the human race, and a being, or beings of a much superior order; who not only direct the affairs of the present world, communicate blessings, or inflict evils in our passage through life, but have the future destiny of mortals in their own hands. It is believed, that some actions and dispositions are acceptable to these beings, and will ensure their future favour; while others will provoke their anger, and expose the offender to its dreadful consequences. These sentiments characterize Religion, according to the most comprehensive sense of the term. Religion, therefore, is the connecting medium between two worlds. By it, a prospect is opened of human existence beyond the limits of the grave, and solemn apprehensions of protracted misery, or cheering hopes of protracted felicity, are implanted in the breast. The obscurities that veil this subject, leave ample scope for the imagination to form a thousand conceptions of its own; but although most of these may be absurd, and contradictory to each other, yet every individual who admits them, is compelled to consider himself as placed in a situation infi-

nitely more important than if no connexion subsisted; or if the present existence of man were to terminate in annihilation. That desire of personal good, which operates so powerfully, when we feel ourselves under the controul of our fellow men, and which induces us to obey their severest injunctions, from perceiving that they are the arbiters of our fate, will naturally operate with superior force, under the conviction, that there are invisible beings above us, whom no mortal can oppose; possessing the power of dispensing rewards and punishments, the nature and extent of which are beyond human conceptions. Under the influence of such ideas, the obligations to obey will be most impressively felt. The high importance of these sentiments, is acknowledged and expressed by the word *Religion*. It is used exclusively, to distinguish the reverence and obedience *due* to such superior beings, from every other species of *obligation*. The word, in its etymology, signifies being *firmly bound*; being tied, as it were, again and again, destitute of all power to escape. Hence it is also, that a peculiarity of language is introduced, with universal consent, in order to strike the mind with solemn awe and reverence, as often as a reference is made to subjects which have an immediate relation to religion. Thus, an address to a superior invisible agent, is

termed an act of *worship*; and although the word is sometimes applied to mortals of high authority, it is obviously in a metaphorical sense, and in a style of adulation. The edifices set apart for offices of religion, are denominated *temples*; and they are said to be *consecrated*. These temples, and every appurtenance belonging to them, are venerated as *holy* or *sacred*. Those who are scrupulously attentive to the supposed commands of a deity, are said to be *pious*; and those who pay frequent and grateful acknowledgments are *devout*; praise is *adoration*; submission becomes *resignation*; and every other virtuous act performed from a sense of duty, does not simply retain its virtuous or moral nature, it rises into religious obedience. On the other hand, vice is considered as *sin*; to neglect the duties of morality, is not simply immoral, it is *wicked*; to think or speak irreverently on divine subjects is *profane*; and to set the laws of heaven at open defiance, is *profligacy*. A contempt of religion is *impiety*; and the robbery of temples and churches, is distinguished from common theft, by the more awful name of *sacrilege*.

These facts manifest that mankind unite to consider religious duties, to be the most obligatory of any; that the consequences of disobedience are supposed to be more tremendous and alarming;—that

obedience to beings superior to mortals, and whom no mortal can controul, is a mark of the truest wisdom; that the commands of such beings, are entitled to a precedency over the most exalted, and the most powerful of their own species; in a word, that we are bound, by all the ties of wisdom and prudence to *obey*, however opposite such commands may be to the propensities of the heart.

The motives to obedience from this source, are obviously founded upon the principle of self-interest, ardently desiring to possess the greatest possible good, and to escape from the most tremendous evils; and they operate solely upon our hopes and fears.

Fear is manifestly the strongest of all human passions. When it takes full possession of the mind, it suspends sorrow; extinguishes joy; checks the natural impetuosity of anger; nor can the affection of *Love* dwell with a servile dread. Every act committed under the immediate terror of punishment, menaced by a power which cannot be resisted, is deemed an act of compulsion; and it is admitted as an apology, or an alleviation, where the deeds performed are in themselves nefarious. But the fear of an agent whom no mortal can resist, is expected to be still more operative. The superiority of his nature, strikes awe into the mind;

the extent of his power being unknown, leads the imagination to consider it to be unbounded; and the might of the greatest earthly potentate appears to be imbecility, when placed in competition with it.

Hope is the next powerful incitement, acting in an opposite direction. It animates to that line of conduct, which is not only calculated to mitigate fear, but to procure actual enjoyment. Here an impressive sense of an unlimited power to communicate good, encourages the expectation that this good will infinitely exceed the utmost that mortals can bestow. History informs us, that the union of these two principles has induced ignorant votaries, with which absurd religions abound, to make every sacrifice, in order to escape evils of a still greater magnitude. They have patiently submitted to the severest hardships, in hopes of rendering themselves acceptable to the powers they worshipped, and averting their wrath. Of this truth the voluntary sufferings of different kinds, sustained with amazing fortitude by various devotees of the East, and by the monks of the Romish church, in the days of gross superstition, furnish many examples.

From this view of the nature and influence of religion, considered in the more enlarged accepta-

tion of the term, it is manifest that when ideas formed of religion are consonant with those of moral duties, they must be very powerful incitements to the practice of virtue. When it is uniformly believed that the injunctions of a superior, extend to every ramification of virtue, the belief promises to be most influential in maintaining an uniform tenor of virtuous obedience. Nothing can weaken its influence, but the apparent distance of time between the discharge of the duty, and the enjoyment of the expected reward; between the disobedience and the infliction of the punishment apprehended. This interval gives occasion to sensible objects to exert that power inherent in sensible objects, of seducing the mind from the paths of virtue, by the promise of present gratifications. A desire to indulge some forbidden passion, secretly suggests to the mind, that repentance, obedience, sacrifices and austerities, at any period of this intermediate space, will be sufficient to avert the contingent punishment, and perhaps entitle to the desired recompense.

It must, therefore, be readily admitted, that when a superior being, whose authority is irresistible, commands mortals to practise virtue, and enforces these commands by the sanction of rewards and punishments, the discharge of the duties

enjoined, becomes obligatory upon men as rational and as interested beings. They would otherwise be guilty of the egregious folly, of sacrificing the choicest good human nature can enjoy, and exposing themselves to the most tremendous evils it can suffer.

We perceive, from the above analytical survey, that, as the duties of morality have a much more extensive influence on human welfare, than any laws instituted by human authority, moral sanctions are more numerous and important; and inducements, are multiplied according to the diversities of obligation. Human laws chiefly operate upon the fears of individuals. Individual offenders suffer in the most exemplary manner, while the obedient are merely partakers of the general good. But in the practice of virtue, and according to the laws of morality, every particular act brings with it a certain recompense. Personal virtues amply repay the agent by the evil he escapes, or the positive good he enjoys. Justice, so essential to public security, peace, and harmony, is rewarded by inward tranquility, not to be disturbed by the risk of detection; and by the incalculable advantages derived from a good and upright character. Be-

nevolence enjoys abundantly in the very act of obedience to its dictates. Meditation upon these laws of morality, which secure and diffuse so much good, and which have such distinguished marks of excellence, gives infinitely more delight to the contemplative mind, trained to virtue, than can be enjoyed by the investigation of obscure, partial, accommodating laws of human beings; which are not always wise or good, and under the best regulations, have a tendency to prejudice one class of individuals, in order to benefit another. When to these we add the sanctions of religion, respecting either rewards or punishments, they are acknowledged to exceed either in encouragements or terrors, every promulgation, merely human, beyond the power of imagination to conceive.

SECT. III.

COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE MOTIVES ENUMERATED, RESPECTING THEIR DEGREES OF INFLUENCE UPON MORAL CONDUCT.

Although each of the above motives or incitements to action be good in itself, and be approved by every man, yet there is a considerable difference in their respective degrees of power and extent of application, when they are considered as motives to the practice of virtue. They are not equally subservient to its cause, in every state and situation, wherein the moral agent may be placed. We shall therefore endeavour to investigate, with all the precision in our power, the respective merits and defects of each; and ascertain their peculiar characteristics; that we may learn which of the inducements is most to be depended upon, in our expectations of the steady, uniform practice of every virtue, and the extensive diffusion of the beneficial influence of virtue, among mankind. We shall follow the order observed in the preceding section.

Self-Interest.

It is a happy constitution of our nature, that interest and duty should be able to unite; and that while we are actually promoting the welfare of others, we may be gainers by the success, and even by the attempt. But self-interest does not always influence the mind in this manner. It is not a *motive to virtue alone.* It is, of all the principles of action, the most general. It excites to every kind of exertion which respects ourselves; whether it refer to the gratification of the natural appetites; indulgence of the passions; solicitude about the necessaries, comforts, elegancies of life. It prompts to the pursuit of pleasure, wealth, power. It is operative in all our expectations from others, and greatly influences our conduct towards them. Self-interest, imperfectly understood, is obvious in every *vicious* affection; in every malignant and self-tormenting passion; and in every nefarious action. To be influential, therefore, as a motive to *virtuous* actions, presupposes a due preparation in the mind of the agent. An enlarged perception, and a well disciplined heart are essentially requisite. No small degree of penetration is necessary to be able to keep this in-

terest in view, in the midst of those sacrifices which virtue may demand; to be convinced, that by submitting to a present loss, we shall be remunerated by future gain; and that we shall ultimately augment our happiness, by opposing the strongest propensities of the heart. Self-restraint, when the passions are strong, and the objects of the immediate gratification are before us, will not be the *first* disposition suggested to the mind, by the principle of self-interest; but it will demand the clearest perceptions, the fullest conviction, and the firmest resolution, not to prefer the present good, which courts our affections, to the prospect of good in reversion. We cannot expect such motives to act powerfully and uniformly, upon the minds of those whose passions are strong, whose judgments are weak, and whose habits are inveterate. Thus, notwithstanding it be admitted as an indubitable truth, that virtuous dispositions and habits are the most conducive to permanent well-being, yet it is a truth concealed from the ignorant and vicious: a depraved mind is not easily convinced, that the subjugation of the propensities, which are considered as the prime sources of enjoyment, is essential to its welfare. Nor will it be able to comprehend, that a renunciation of personal enjoyments, and a preference

given to the interests of others, is the securest road to personal well-being.

Conformity to Reason.

The obligation to act according to the dictates of reason, certainly extends itself through every stage of our existence, from the first dawn of reason, to the dissolution of our intellectual faculties. It is a contradiction in terms to assert, that a being endowed with rationality, is permitted to act irrationally in a single instance. To be governed by reason is the grand prerogative of human beings. This faculty was given to direct every part of our conduct; to influence our choice; plan our pursuits; remove our embarrassments; superintend our pleasures; and to convince us of the superior importance of virtue. But the reasoning powers of every man are not, like instinct, perfect and unerring. The power is implanted, but the exercise is our own work; and it is a progressive work. It has been shewn, in another place *, that we are compelled to travel through perception, attention, inquiry, &c. &c. before we can arrive at a just discernment and a wise decision. If it be a fact, that man is born in ignorance, and that the appe-

* See Vol. II, Intellectual Powers.

tites and passions are in exercise, before reason is prepared to direct or controul them; it is no less a fact, that the unerring decisions of reason require much observation, and repeated experience, before a conviction can be obtained of the evils resulting from vicious irregularities, or just notions can be formed of the moral nature and tendency of human actions;—before we are able to examine the principles imbibed in our early days, receiving the sanction of example, and confirmed by habit; or resolve strenuously to oppose the rapid currents which may set in, against the uniform practice of that which is right in itself, and most beneficial in its effects. If these positions be acknowledged, it must also be allowed, that much is to be done before human nature can act uniformly as it ought, by the simple dictates of reason.

When we shall have learned to esteem and value, that mode of conduct which we deem to be virtuous, in consequence of enjoying its beneficial influence; and shall reprobate every vice which has proved pernicious; yet in the infancy of reason, many disgraceful mistakes may be made concerning the nature of particular actions. Through unavoidable ignorance, we may call evil —good; and good—evil. Communities of a small and of a large size, have not unfrequently

formed systems to themselves, which higher degrees of mental culture and civilization, have not only demonstrated to be erroneous, but detestable. Among the Gentoos, the virtuous and pious affections of the wife, are manifested by her determination to commit her body to the flames, in honour of the deceased husband; that is, by an act of self-murder. More civilised nations will admire the calm heroism of the sufferer, but execrate the custom. The Fakeer imagines it to be indubitable, that the conduct most acceptable to deity, consists in resolutely persevering in the most absurd and painful attitudes. Monks in the Romish church, have placed the idea of acceptable religion, and incumbent duty, in the observance of ridiculous vows and austerities of their own devising. Mussulmen have, without remorse, killed their children, upon a reverse of fortune, lest they should be reduced to the disgrace of poverty. We are told by Herodotus, that the primitive Greeks placed virtue in actions, which characterize with us, a lawless banditti; that is, in murdering the innocent, impotent, and unwary: and the wild Arabs are modern instances of the same principles. Among the Spartans, thefts committed with ingenuity and address, so as to escape detection, were encouraged as meritorious. Xenophon informs us, in his Cyropædia, that not only false-

hood and treachery were inculcated against national enemies, but at one period of the Grecian history, pedagogues were appointed to instruct youth in the arts of lying and deceit, until the scholars became too great adepts for the community to subsist. After Astyages had instructed his son Cyrus in every moral principle, the youth was surprised at the information, that these precepts related solely to members of the same community, or those in subjection to it; and that every species of treachery and deceit, towards an enemy, belonged to the science of war. These, and numerous instances of the same complexion, evince, that a considerable degree of moral culture is necessary, before persons of the most virtuous dispositions, acquire a knowledge of what is due from one human being to another; or become divested of those local and national prejudices, which render the laws of humanity of so contracted and partial an influence.

It has already been hinted, that the punishment of irrational conduct arises from the effect of such conduct. He that acts contrary to the dictates of his own reason, exposes himself to all the consequences of his folly, and the reproaches of his own mind. If he act irrationally, in opposition to the advice of his wiser counsellors, he will suffer the addition of their just reproaches. If a whole com-

munity be governed by absurd and irrational principles, its members may be too ignorant and insensible to reproach each other; but they must suffer a diminution of that good, which right principles and conduct would have ensured; and they may receive incalculable injuries from communities, that are wiser than themselves.

Thus, as reason is not of speedy growth, and proposes no other sanction to its dictates, than the natural consequences of things; as it is extremely liable to be obscured by involuntary ignorance, confirmed habits, and inveterate prejudices, which may be diffused over a whole community, we cannot expect, motives from this source, to be universally operative; or to possess power sufficient to stem the tide of vicious propensities, and counteract the force of evil example. A mind must be well informed, truly philosophic, perfectly calm, and exempt from dispositions and propensities which reason does not authorize, to be induced to walk in the paths of virtue, simply by the rule of right, without the co-operation of more interesting inducements.

The Social Principle.

When the social principle manifests itself in particular affections and predilections, by which a

solicitude for the happiness of another is excited, these affections will induce us to promote the happiness of the beloved object; and the principle will be a faithful guardian of all those virtues which are termed social, as far as these strong affections shall extend †. It will insure just and honourable conduct; and it fosters a spirit of benevolence, by the repetition of beneficent actions. But the motives derived from this principle are, at first, very partial and circumscribed in their influence. It is long before they will induce a man to forego, in any degree, his own personal welfare for the benefit of any one, who is not an intimate acquaintance. Nor does the social principle imply a spirit of universal benevolence. In many cases it becomes hostile to this spirit, by forming associations tenacious of peculiar and exclusive rights, guaranteed to each other by its respective members.

But the social principle is not always favourable to virtue, even in these circumscribed and partial associations. It may simply be a modification of self interest. Personal advantage may be the only bond of union; and the approbation or censure of the society, may be the grand inducements to obey its rules. The most influential motive may

† See Vol. II. Sect. IV. Social Attachments, p. 316.

consist in what is termed a *sense of honour*, that is, a solicitude to obtain approbation, or to avoid disgrace.

The principal advantage attendant upon this motive of conduct is, that it dislodges insulated self-love. It permits actions to extend their benefit to others, from a principle of more refined selfishness; and it may be favourable to the practice of social virtues, even from a respect to self.

When we seek reputation and applause, by actions which are in themselves commendable, the influence of this motive will naturally lead us to display the more popular and striking virtues, without paying due attention to those of a more private nature. We may appear courteous, liberal, humane, in our public character, while we secretly practise the vices of fraud and peculation. It is possible that we may practise these, in order to obtain applause by popular actions. Humility, patience, contentment, being destitute of splendour, will not be noted down among our maxims of conduct; and we may possibly despise those who cultivate these virtues, as being feeble-minded, and destitute of spirit. The fear of censure and contempt, may operate to the concealment of our vices, and not their eradication; and a confidence of security from the

inspection of others, will remove every restraint upon the indulgence.

As the love of praise, and the principle of honour, operate with equal propriety upon different communities, they may possibly *promote* rather than *subdue* those animosities which are so fatal to the peace of mankind; and which the universal practice of virtue would completely annihilate. *A sense of honour* induces a warrior to expose himself to numerous difficulties and dangers, in attacking the enemies of his country; and a *sense of honour*, animates his antagonist to resist the attack with ardour and intrepidity. Thus one class of true patriots destroys another class, and spreads distress, at which humanity shudders, but "they are all honourable men." It may also be remarked, that as in every contest, one party must be the aggressor and the other the aggrieved, this honourable principle must frequently be enlisted on the side of injustice, and exert its prowess to the injury of the innocent.

The love of distinction, and a thirst of glory, which characterize this principle, are also subject to another unfavourable circumstance. Pre-eminence cannot be conferred upon multitudes. Although the love of glory may animate multitudes to exploits, highly advantageous to the common weal, yet the honour, being shared among many

individuals, it is proportionably diminished in its value. A state may possibly arrive to such a height of military glory, that heroism may become a familiar virtue; and the disgrace of not being heroic, may be much greater than the renown acquired by the display of this virtue. The repetition of magnanimous deeds, shall receive the award of simple approbation, and no longer call forth its proper recompense, the enthusiastic applause and admiration of the public; while the want of this virtue, shall be the more severely stigmatised, from its being unusual. Happily for its inhabitants, Great Britain has long been in this singular situation. The skill and valour of our forces, both by land and on the ocean, have so repeatedly performed wonders, that they cease to be wonders. The praises conferred upon one army or one fleet, have been the repetition of former encomiums. The hero, who has fallen for his country's good, at a former period, lies buried and almost forgotten, under heaps of heroes of a more recent date.

A *sense of honour* depends, in its operations and effects, upon the opinions of others. It must therefore be as various as their opinions are various; and thus it may excite to actions of the most opposite nature. The numberless advantages derived from the intimacies of social inter-

course, inspire the disposition to accommodate ourselves to their maxims and manners; but these may lead to the commission of every extravagance, and foster every vice. It is the fear of incurring ignominy, by violating the customs of her country, that prompts the female Indian to self-destruction. The love of fame may pervert the judgment to so great a degree, that such deeds as are the most condemned by unperverted reason, shall obtain the highest applause. Of this kind are the exploits of pirates and marauders. It is this which constitutes the virtuous prowess of the wild Arab, in the opinion of his countrymen; and animates him to rob or murder the unwary stranger, with triumph and exultation, unmixed with compassion or remorse.

We have already observed, that greater and less divisions of society, are distinguished by some particular principle received by their respective members; a deviation from which is resented, as a culpable violation of the rules and orders of the society; and is punished by all the disgrace its members can inflict. But there may be societies formed, whose principles are diametrically opposite to the principles of virtue; even in a country where the principles of virtue are well known and highly revered. There are associations of gamesters, for example, where the sole object of the members is

to despoil each other; where they professedly meet "to undo or be undone;" but HONOUR sits as president in the assembly, and dictates her commands in so loud a tone, as to silence the voice of justice and humanity. The debts of honour, that is, debts rashly incurred by a casual throw of the die, an unfavourable shuffling of the cards, or mistakes of the gamester; debts contracted by an eagerness to obtain the fortune of an associate, without any other equivalent than that of exposure to the same danger, are discharged with scrupulous exactness, while the honest and industrious tradesman, without whose aid they would not have been admitted to the seducing table, is exposed to embarrassments, and even to bankruptcy itself, by the unjust conduct of these *most honourable men.*

In like manner does a high sense of honour, as it is deemed, impose the cruel task upon a man, naturally courteous and humane, to suppress every worthy principle and exalted feeling; forbid him to indulge his inward disposition to forget a slight inadvertency, or the improprieties committed at a momentary impulse; and impel him to seek the life of his friend; to deprive society of one, perhaps two valuable members; to spread horrors over amiable and once happy families; and satiate this honour by the commission of a deed,

which implants anguish in his breast, during the remainder of his days.

But this principle goes further. It constitutes the bond of union in a horde of banditti. While they laugh at general censure, and despise public punishment, they cannot support the contempt of their associates in iniquity. The fear of reproach inspires them with the desperate courage to rob and murder; and they expect renown from their comrades, in exact proportion to the atrocity of their conduct. Honour places the stiletto in the hands of a professed assassin, who is ready to plunge it into any breast to which his engagement directs; and who would think himself a disgrace to his profession, were he to relent, through the feelings of humanity, or divert the blow from the innocent and unsuspecting, to his guilty employer *.

The Benevolent Principle.

From what has been advanced concerning the nature, influence, aud even personal recompense, attendant upon the endeavour to promote general happiness, or to practise universal benevolence,

* Note C.

it must appear to be much superior, in the extent of its efficacy, to any other motive that has been examined. It is both minute and universal in its operations. It avoids every possible injury at all times; and penetrates into the recesses of misery in order to relieve. But as it is an exalted, so is it a *rare* virtue; and it is peculiarly slow in growth. Self-love is prior to the social affections, apt to be much stronger in its influence, and more uniformly operative. A temper naturally sordid, an indiscreet indulgence of self-love in childhood and youth, and the adoption of contracted maxims, in more advanced life, or stages of society, under the supposition that they are *prudent* and *politic*, too frequently confine the benevolent disposition to narrow circles, when it begins to developе.

Those who maintain that benevolence is, in fact, a species of self-interest, a *refined* self-interest rightly understood, must acknowledge that this position is not an obvious truth. It is a discovery which can only result from much culture, and self-discipline, and habits of practice. It is long before the multitude will be purified from the dross of that more obvious selfishness, which consists in an appropriation to our own immediate use, or being the perpetual guardians of our own safety; and is a stranger to the satisfaction of yielding to

others whatever it is able to grasp to its own advantage. When the excellence of benevolence is acknowledged, it will gain many inactive admirers, to one genuine proselyte. The majority will applaud much sooner than they will imitate. We frequently observe also, that persons who are far from being destitute of this principle, will remain satisfied with a few occasional exertions of it; with the relief of such distress as presents itself immediately to the view, or as their affections are raised by striking and pathetic representations, rather than act upon it as a steady uniform principle, capable of infinite ramifications in the social intercourse, and of producing good in all.

A benevolence permanently operative, requires mental discipline of the most exalted kind, and a superior degree of self subjugation. It flourishes with most vigour, when these are united with a disposition naturally kind and benignant; but it cannot perhaps arrive at its due extent, without such a liberal intercourse with the world, as shall contribute to subdue those local and national prejudices, which are so general and so pertinacious; prejudices which are not only deemed innocent, but laudable, by the multitude who indulge them. Hence, as it is the most exalted and refined principle of action, we cannot expect its complete in-

fluence at an early period. It is the highest polish, which comes last; the Corinthial capital, which finishes, as it ornaments the column.

On the Beauty of Virtue.

The beauty, the dignity, the sublimity of virtue, have frequently been urged as motives to practise it; and they are motives much too noble and refined not to be highly respected. But it will be proper to advert to the nature and extent of its influence, that we may ascertain its proper place in the catalogue of motives. When we speak of the *beauty* of virtue abstractedly, it appears, from what has already been advanced, that we are placing the *pleasures* derived from the contemplation of virtue, in the same rank with every other source of *pleasurable sensations,* to which the term *beauty* is applicable. The sublimest idea which the word conveys is, that of a refined gratification from what is pleasing to a cultivated taste; and should we be disposed to give her the precedency, it is alone from the perception that she is the most accomplished. The only idea of utility, which presents itself, arises from its being able to afford a refined mental gratification, in the contemplation of it; but this presents us with no

other inducement to cultivate virtuous dispositions, than what is common to the cultivation of the fine arts; and it affords no other inducement to avoid vicious pursuits, than the loss of a more delicate and exalted pleasure. But he that gives the preference to vice, will not repent of his choice, merely because the article is of an inferior quality. Let the virtuous mind despise the man who prefers the pleasures of vice, he will reply, "Every man to his taste: pursue your gratifications, and leave me to my own: you say they are inferior to yours, but I am contented." There may be some persons who, out of preference, "eat the husks which the swine do eat," and while their taste is vitiated and depraved, it will be in vain that you place higher delicacies before them.

The *beauty of virtue* is a favourite expression with some philosophers;and all who love virtue will acknowledge her beauty. But it must be confessed that her charms will never induce the multitude to "fall in love at first sight;" and it is probable that long before their tastes shall be formed, in a manner to be captivated by the beauty of this most deserving mistress, they may have been seduced by more sensible charms of a meritricious nature. Those who prefer the majestic beauty of Minerva,

to the seductive blandishments of Venus, will manifest a deeper penetration, and a more exalted taste. But as these are not the necessary prerequisites in the admiration of the latter, her votaries will be more numerous. Heathen mythologists have always placed these two divinities in opposition to each other; and they have always represented Minerva as being surrounded with much fewer votaries than her rival.

The truth is, the term *beauty*, when applied to Virtue, is an *adopted* and *metaphorical* term; and as such it may illustrate a particular character or quality, but it cannot be considered as a moral principle of action; for it can suggest no other motive than that suggested by its prototype, that is, the enjoyment of pleasure. According to the primitive signification of *beauty*, its constituent parts consist of qualities which strike the senses; such as colour, figure, proportion, &c. &c. which produce pleasing sensations in the beholder. When the word is applied to subjects not visible to the eye, it means to express order, harmony, and such other qualities, as are calculated to produce pleasurable sensations, in the contemplative mind. We may naturally expect, that the prompt and extensive influence of pleasing qualities, will be according to the facility with which they are perceived; and as sensible objects are most obvious,

the number of those who would yield to the impulse on their senses, may be expected greatly to exceed the contemplative votaries of a beauty, whose transcendent qualities are abstracted from sense. Natural beauty, being the quality of sensible objects, every property it possesses is exhibited at once; and although it may consist, like light, of component parts, yet, like light, it strikes the beholder at one percussion, and as if it possessed but one individual property. The beauty of virtue is not composed of such striking qualities. The peculiar nature of her charms is to be learned by observation, and experience; by contemplating the beneficial effects she produces to individuals, and to communities at large. But this directs our attention to the *dowry* she brings with her, and no longer confines our thoughts to the pleasing effects of beauty, simply considered. The mind that is so far advanced as to love virtue for its own sake, still admires it for the particular power it possesses of diffusing good.

Ideas of the *dignity* and *sublimity* of virtue, are still more refined, and consequently these are attributes, which will continue incomprehensible to the rude and uncultivated multitude. These terms are moreover applicable solely to some peculiar virtues, occasionally practised by more exalted

minds. There is no dignity in abstaining from knavish actions; there is much dignity in pardoning a great offence, which we have full power to punish.

Human Authority.

It has been already hinted that, when the laws of civil society correspond with the principles of virtue, they may become, in some degree, its guardians; and they may cooperate with some other motives. It is their peculiar advantage, that they are able to exert their influence over minds, which have not enjoyed the benefits of cultivation. This is an advantage not possessed by either of the principles of action, which have passed under review. The nature of the injunction and of its sanctions, may be rendered explicit and unequivocal, by a perspicuous statement; and when they are duly promulgated, no plea of ignorance can be urged, no lapse of time is rendered necessary for the slow progress of education, or the previous investigation of first principles, which might proportionably retard practice.

By the sanction of rewards and punishments, the fears and hopes of the subjects are powerfully excited. As hope and fear are the passions in our

nature most promptly and energetically operative; and as they have enjoyment or suffering for their immediate object, they are doubtless calculated to make a more instantaneous and vivid impression, than tedious inductions, or a speculative discernment of the aggregate of happiness or misery, attendant upon a series of virtuous or vicious actions.

The sanctions of human laws, are also calculated to act powerfully upon the social principle in man, by their being immediately connected with public approbation, or public ignominy. Through the medium of associated ideas, these laws may implant a certain detestation of that class of vices, which expose the offender to disgrace; and inspire a kind of predilection for those virtues, which may entitle to a flattering recompense.

But, with all these advantages, human laws are not calculated to dispose the mind to the love of universal virtue, or enforce obedience to all its injunctions.

We have remarked already, that it is a characteristic of human laws, and particularly of those which respect the civil œconomy of a country, to operate much more powerfully upon the *fears* than upon the *hopes* of men; and that the leading idea of *obligation*, is immediately connected with the painful sensation of *dread*. But fear is the

lowest, and least respectable of all the motives to action. It is principally adapted to such minds, as are supposed to be insensible to motives of a more ingenuous character; to such minds as are habitually servile, and whose sordid interests can alone be subdued by the terror of experiencing certain misery. Here the obligation to obedience may commence, and here also it may terminate.

Again, where the laws of an human legislator, with their penalties, have the most successful influence, of a virtuous tendency, they are chiefly directed against the vice of *injustice,* in some of its most obvious branches. Their grand object is to deter from the more gross and flagrant violations of life and property. Many violations of prudence, discretion, veracity; many secret injuries and egregious offences, are inevitably excluded from their code. Nor can human injunctions compel to acts of benevolence; or to the social, delightful, consoling, duties of love, gratitude, friendship, &c. which are such quick and lively prompters to the discharge of every social and relative duty; constitute so large a portion of human felicity; and can be seated only in the virtuous mind.

But human laws do not always inculcate the principles of virtue. They are sometimes unjust

and oppressive; and thus become patterns of immorality. They may in some cases, absolutely enjoin the commission of crimes. This is very observable when sovereignty uncontrouled, is seized by an usurper, whose wisdom is solely occupied in forming plans of ambition and aggrandizement; and who issues, without reserve, and without compunction, every mandate that may render them successful. Hopes and fears are now enlisted into the service of *vice*. The power of rewarding with profusion, or of inflicting the most dreadful calamities, renders all within the sphere of his authority the creatures of his will. Reward or punishment being sole motives to obedience, every consideration is sacrificed to these. The nature and tendency of the mandate is of no moment. Thus may the principles of virtue be most strenuously opposed, and a sense of obligation fatal to the laws of morality, be deeply implanted. Deeds of the most atrocious kind will be placed in the rank of duties, and be enforced by the most dreadful penalties. The perpetration of these may become the direct road to wealth and honours; while an adherence to the dictates of morality, may be laden with disgrace and misery.

Exclusive of these excesses, human laws, when suggested by the appearance of political necessi-

ty, or destined to answer some purpose of partial utility, have unfortunately the power of creating a species of artificial virtue and vice, highly detrimental to genuine morality. By rendering that mode of conduct criminal to day, which was innocent yesterday; by inflicting the same kind, and the same severity of punishment, upon offences committed against the laws of convenience and accommodation, which are denounced against the most flagrant crimes, the minds of the multitude soon forget the moral distinction between right and wrong. Inadvertencies, which were innocent before the prohibition, being confounded, in the punishment, with the blackest crimes; and intrinsic guilt being measured by the punishment and disgrace attached to an action, by minds that cannot accurately distinguish, the moral principle is obtunded: hopes and fears are capriciously excited; and the terrors of human laws denounced against slight misdemeanors, are confounded with the terrors of heaven, due alone to the most enormous vices.

It is obvious, from the above minute investigation, that although each of the principles enumerated may contain proper inducements, to the practice of virtue, yet they are of a partial influence, or they

require such a state and cultivation of mind as cannot be found, and are not to be expected in the generality of men, during the earlier stages of voluntary action, and of social intercourse. Self interest is an universal principle of action; and it relates to virtue, merely as one of the means of procuring personal good, in common with many others. There is also a refinement in this motive to virtuous practice, which neither the vulgar, nor the depraved, can easily perceive. A conformity to the dictates of reason, presupposes that all mankind are prepared and disposed to act rationally, from the first dawn of their existence. The social principle is partial, uncertain, treachrous; and of itself may lead more frequently to vicious than to virtuous conduct. Benevolence and the love of virtue, demand the prerequisites of high cultivation, and a well disciplined mind; and therefore cannot be the incipient principles of action. Were these the only motives to virtue, mankind would become totally abandoned, long before their power of action could commence; and this universal depravity, would of itself constitute an insuperable impediment to their beneficient operations. Human laws are, at the best, but of partial influence. They sometimes mislead, and sometimes they authorize or enjoin immoralities.

The effects of Religion upon human conduct, being correspondent with the conceptions formed of Religion, it demands peculiar attention.

SECT. IV.

ON THE RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES MOST CONDUCIVE TO THE UNIFORM PRACTICE OF VIRTUE.

We have shown that Religion, from its superior nature, and superior importance, is acknowledged to contain in it, the most influential inducements to act in conformity to the supposed mandates of the Being worshipped; and that the belief in the existence of a superior being, who is the arbiter of our destiny, and who lays his injunctions upon mortals, naturally induces with it the idea of *Duty* and *Obligation*. Thus the principles of every religion indiscriminately, by inculcating the doctrine, that beings superior to man, direct sublunary affairs, open a connection and intercourse between mankind, and these supernatural agents. As the duties of morality, abstracted from religion, respect mankind in their social character, thus it is admitted, that other duties and obligations naturally arise from this superior relationship; and that these duties consist in fearing the dis-

pleasure, resignation to the agency, and obedience to the will of the being worshipped. These sentiments are adopted, even in those religions where the affection of *love* towards this being, was never considered as a necessary ingredient. As the terms *virtue* and *morality*, best express the *social* duties, so the term *piety*, is employed to distinguish the dispositions and actions, which arise from the relation of man, to a superior order of beings. Every act of obedience, every attempt to ingratiate, every demonstration of zeal, every instance of resignation, are considered as *pious* acts, and *pious* duties.

Had this subjected state of mind, and reverential awe of their divinities, which were so conspicuous in the heathen world, been invariably connected with the duties of morality, they must have had great power and efficacy. But this was not the case. According to the system of the heathens, the most exalted honours they could confer on their deities, was to *revere their power*; and this idea of uncontrouled sovereignty operated, chiefly, if not solely, upon the hopes and fears of the worshippers. The *moral character* of the Deity, or the *moral* nature of his commands, were seldom taken into consideration. The duty and recompense, on the one hand, disobedience and chastisement on the other, were the only consi-

derations that influenced their minds. The characters of their deities were merely human characters, endowed with more exalted honours and extent of power. They possessed human failings; and to many of them the most enormous vices were imputed. As a more acceptable homage cannot be devised, than to propose the character and conduct of a superior, for models of imitation; as it is thus that the servile minions of the great, always court the favour of their sovereigns; ignorant devotees would indulge, without restraint, all those vicious propensities which were ascribed to the God whom they served! It was according to this principle, that the most abominable and cruel rites were performed in the heathen temples, as solemn acts of religion. Mercury was faithfully served as the patron of thieves. Ebriety became devotion in the temple of Bacchus; and prostitution in the temple of Venus. Discord and bloodshed were consecrated to Bellona; and human sacrifices in great abundance, have been considered as *pious* offerings, on the altars of malignant dæmons. In most of these instances the passions of hope and fear, would have powerful auxiliaries, in the congeniality of the service itself, with the depraved dispositions of the votary. It is obvious, that the worship of beings, supposed to require such services, and vested with such characters, must be inimical

to every principle of virtue. The supposition must have had a natural tendency to foster a cruel revengeful spirit, to trample upon the principles of justice, to extinguish benevolence, and to inflame every carnal propensity.

Hence it appears that Religion, being the most influential of all motives, when it makes an impression upon the mind, according to its natural importance, may, by erroneous conceptions of it, be productive of the greatest evils. False conceptions of the divinity to be served, and the duties to be performed, as often as they influence to correspondent actions, are as tremendous as the misapplication of an immense momentum, which will become injurious, or destructive, according to the magnitude of the power.

But there are other sentiments of religion, entertained by multitudes, particularly in these more happy days, perfectly consonant to reason, and containing within them principles and encouragements, to the practice of universal virtue. Sentiments, with which all the other motives to virtue already mentioned, perfectly harmonise; and from which they receive an additional energy. They are the same that were briefly stated, upon a former occasion, as being the richest sources of personal *happiness*, in every state and situation of life*.

* See Vol. II. p. 386, passim.

This important coincidence gives them a double claim to our particular attention.

It has been remarked that a Religion most productive of happiness, must renounce a *plurality of Gods*. The renunciation is equally necessary to secure an uniformity in moral conduct. The diversities in opinion, and consequent diversities of religious services among the heathen nations, were as absurd, and fatal, as they were numerous. The imagination that deities of the most opposite characters existed, naturally introduced the greatest contrarieties in their ideas of obedience, and in their own dispositions and characters; as well as in their rites and ceremonies. The diversities in the passions and predilections, which they ascribed to the Gods whom they served, destroyed the possibility of uniform conduct, or of a steady moral character among themselves; rendering that highly meritorious, in the opinion of one class of people, which was deemed impious by another. The confusion and contrariety of sentiments which thus prevailed, while they were injurious to the public morals, fostered a spirit of doubt and scepticism in the minds of those whose good sense opposed the vulgar notions; and who smiled at those ridiculous rites, which rendered religion as diversified and as absurd, as were the prejudices of mankind. By the admission of one univer-

sal sovereign, possessing one permanent character, our ideas of obedience are rendered uniform, and the expectations of all intelligent beings will be similar. The affections also, which most correspond with the sentiments entertained of the moral character of this deity, by being directed to one object, will be rendered more constant and more ardent, than if they were divided and subdivided among a number of objects, supposed to have similar claims; were we to admit of a perfect similarity in their moral dispositions. By acknowledging that divine homage is due to one being only, perfectly able to assist, and perfectly willing to bestow, every necessary good on his pious votaries, the worship of inferior and subordinate deities becomes superfluous. For whatever influence we may imagine them to possess, they are still to be considered as the instruments and agents of a superior, to whose power they are also subjected, and whose will must also be the rule of their actions. Consequently, as these subordinates can have no power or will of their own, independent of their principal; and as we cannot suppose, that their dispositions to benefit us, exceed the benevolence of the great first cause, who inspired them with whatever excellences they might possess; or that their revengeful propensi-

ties to punish, will prevail against supreme authority, addresses presented immediately to them must be unnecessary; and they are obviously derogatory from the honours due to the supreme. The affections of love and gratitude, and dispositions to obedience from these sublime motives, will inevitably accompany the immediate perception of obligation. Thus will the best oblations of the heart be presented to subordinates; to the indecent and impious neglect of the primary source of good.

II. A conviction that *Virtuous Conduct* is most acceptable to this being, and that the commission of vice, is disobedience to his will, is also indispensably necessary. Our remarks on polytheism fully manifest, that votaries, awake to their interests, will always endeavour to direct their conduct in such a manner, as to render themselves acceptable to the Gods they worship. They will rejoice, when the ideas they entertain concerning the requisitions of their deities, correspond with their own vicious propensities, and vindictive *passions*; and when the performance of what they deem sacred rites, is a gratification of these propensities; but when they imagine that the severest discipline, submission to the most painful sufferings, or the sacrifice of their favorite inclinations, are demanded, they still think it is their duty

to obey. They fear that omission will expose them to much greater evils, than those to be endured in the compliance; and they hope, that an indemnification will finally succeed. Considering these as principles founded in human nature, a persuasion that the deity loves and enjoins virtue, becomes necessary to constitute the practice of virtue an act of religion. Were we to suppose him to be indifferent concerning the moral conduct of moral agents, religious motives to the performance of moral duties could not exist. No other reward or punishment could be expected from performance or neglect, than what proceeds from the incidental circumstances we have enumerated above.

III. The practice of virtue, from religious motives, implies, that the deity whom we serve, has a perfect *Knowledge* of our conduct, of the secret dispositions of the mind, and the genuine character of every motive in the performance of every action. Without a conviction that he possesses this knowledge, the simple idea of his existence, or even of his predilection for virtue, would have no influence. For were he ignorant of dispositions and motives, the merit or demerit of the agent must remain unknown; and it would be impossible to inflict just punishment or confer suitable re-

wards. The supposition that his knowledge is imperfect, would induce the agent to make a practical distinction, destructive of uniformity in virtuous conduct; and he would be encouraged to indulge some favourite propensities, from the hopes that they would not be observed. It is further necessary to suppose, that divine knowledge extends to the nature and influence of moral agency; that it perceives, without the possibility of an error, certain indissoluble connexions between the precepts enjoined, and the ends which it has in view; ends that can alone be accomplished by the love and practice of virtue, and alone be frustrated by the habitual practice of vice. Such a conviction will induce to obey, where the propriety of the injunction may not be conspicuous. It will regulate the dispositions of the heart, and render the performance of secret duties as constant and exact, as the more open and ostentatious. When the Moralist is assured that a duty is enjoined, whether the conviction arise from the inferences of an enlightened mind, or from an immediate revelation, he will assiduously perform it; although it may at the instant appear in the light of a sacrifice; a diminution of the good he might have enjoyed; or an exposure to evils he might have shunned. He will always be assured, that a being of transcendent knowledge, may ob-

serve dangers when he imagined there was peace, ease, and safety; and that essential good is alone to be secured by walking in the paths ordained, although they may be rugged or thorny.

IV. To the attribute of knowledge, the Moralist must connect that of *Wisdom*. Wisdom consists in the application of knowledge to some purpose of utility. In the most intelligent of human beings, the acquisition of competent knowledge must be prior to the formation of plans, accounted wise; and an extensive knowledge of facts respecting properties, relations, influences, &c. must be obtained, before the inventive and directing powers of man can be exerted, in the application of the various branches of knowledge, to the accomplishment of any desired purpose. In the human species the attribute of wisdom, is not always connected with that of knowledge. Knowledge has been frequently collected and treasured up in the minds of individuals, like useless furniture, perhaps elegant and costly, which has never been employed to any beneficial purpose. Were we to imagine the deity to be of a similar character, we might entertain doubts concerning the merits or utility of the precepts enjoined. When we admit that the perception of certain relations, between modes of conduct and their results, forms the basis of his laws; and presume that the prac-

tice of virtue will lead to important issues, which can only be impeded by vice; and when we confess, that the commands which are the most irksome to our present feelings, are still the ordinations of perfect wisdom; our confidence is increased. The divine knowledge is no longer viewed simply as a foresight of what is most beneficial, but as connected with a certain arrangement; as a decree, that certain results shall take place in consequence of prescribed modes of acting. Such a conviction is calculated to inspire a resolution, both firm and cheerful, that we will encounter various dangers and difficulties, knowing that the wisdom of deity is able to steer us safe, through the consequences we dreaded; and will prove to our future experience, that the conduct enjoined was the only path to final and extensive good.

V. It is absolutely necessary, that the moral agent should believe in the *Justice* of the being whom he serves. We learn from our attention to the nature of *justice*, that it punishes no one beyond the extent of criminality; and that it will confer the stipulated recompense, notwithstanding it shall greatly exceed the intrinsic merit of the act. Hence it appears that the punishment must be limited, where the offence is not infinite; but that no law of justice demands a similar limitation, respecting the reward. The compact being

made, the veracity of the proposer becomes a security against a violation of it, to the disappointment of the party, who has complied with the terms. When the moral agent applies these principles to the subject of virtue, he must be assured that a just deity will make a distinction, between those who endeavour to obey his commands, and those who habitually and determinately violate them: he has a right to expect that a distinction of treatment will take place, according to a moral distinction in character. Notwithstanding his lamented deficiences respecting *absolute* merit, *conditional* merit belongs to him, by the unremitted exertion of his endeavours; and when the man who loves virtue and attempts to practise it, is weighed in the scale against the man who gives the reins to his lusts and desires, and derides all the precepts of morality, no one can deny his great superiority in *comparative* merit.

The philosophic Moralist clearly perceives a natural and necessary connexion, between the universal practice of virtue, and universal prosperity. He knows that disorder, confusion, misery, naturally result from general depravity; and being convinced that these results are according to the ordination of a wise being, he will also be convinced that the same wisdom, which has ordained so intimate a connexion between virtue and well-

being, vice and unhappiness, will himself be the perfect pattern of justice through every part of his dominions. The believer in a divine revelation, which enjoins the practice of virtue and forbids vice, under the sanction of promises and threats, believes that neither will be nugatory: and that the veracity of a just being, is pledged to act conformably to each declaration.

It is obvious that these conceptions of divine justice, have a more immediate influence upon the hopes and fears of responsible beings, than either of the preceding articles of belief. The other attributes, hitherto mentioned, do not necessarily imply an immediate connexion with the human species. They may be centered in a being to whom we are not responsible. They may simply be the subjects of approbation. But the expectation of a just and solemn retribution, applies to our feelings. It is addressed to our hopes and fears, by manifesting an interest of infinite moment.

VI. An incitement to virtue still more influential and encouraging, is, a firm belief in the *Benevolence* of the deity worshipped. The rational Moralist knows that benevolence, united with wisdom in a character, cannot be an imbecility, upon which the wicked may venture to presume. He knows that benevolence and wisdom, united with

the attribute of power, are *disposed* to effect, *can* effect, and *will* effect the best of all possible purposes. The observations which were made, in a preceding part of this work, concerning the nature of Benevolence, and its various ramifications, manifest its superior attractions to every other moral quality, possessed by an intelligent agent. This is goodness itself;—essential goodness, pure and unalloyed; and as such, it most powerfully attracts our love. The idea of justice always inspires respect; and in union with wisdom and power, it fills the breast of innocence itself with awe and reverence. It often inspires *terror*. The reason of the unjust, the wicked, and depraved, must approve of a sentence of condemnation; but such a display of justice, notwithstanding the approbation of reason, cannot possibly draw forth those affections which constitute happiness. It is a conviction of unbounded *benevolence* in a character, that implants *love* and cherishes *confidence*. It inspires a trembling hope, even under a consciousness of imperfections, from the full assurance that there will not be the slightest inclination of the balance to our prejudice; and that no plea which is admissible, will be rejected. Benevolence of character insures the promised reward to its utmost extent: for a benevolent mind is most disposed to those acts of justice, which are in the class

of remuneration. The love inspired by this character destroys the servility of obedience. The mind, under the influence of this affection, cannot be satisfied with a superficial observance of commands. It makes the minutest branch of duty a pleasure; which in every case is the best security to a consistency of conduct. It encounters difficulties with ardour, and surmounts them with alacrity and delight; looking for its most exalted recompence in the complacency of the object beloved. When the practical Moralist contemplates the nature of virtue, perceives it is essential to the enjoyments which are most satisfactory, refined, permanent, and extensive; when he is assured that the uniform and universal observance of its duties, would almost annihilate human misery; that it would secure the possession of every natural, and every social blessing; he loves his God for loving virtue. He makes the strictest obedience to the divine commands the joy of his heart; and he feels nothing irksome concerning them, but his own imperfections.

VII. A conviction that the one God possessing power, knowledge, wisdom, justice, and goodness, is the *Parent* of mankind, presents us with another influential motive to the uniform and cheerful discharge of every duty—that of *filiation*.

The multitudes who worshipped the heathen deities, were solely actuated by the belief, that these deities were able to confer benefits, or inflict evil upon men. A belief that they were the *Creators* of the world, and the *Parents* of the human race, did not form a necessary part of their creed. Various were their notions of the manner in which these imaginary beings had obtained their great superiority; but the wisest among them admitted of one creator, whom they called Jupiter, the father of gods and men; and this idea necessarily excluded the worship of other beings under the character of creators. The pagans entertained the idea of local deities; superintendants of particular districts, either beneficial or injurious. Hence it was that they occasionally worshipped the gods of neighbouring nations, which they had conquered, or by which they were subdued; that this partial and local interest might be exerted in their favour. Thus it is manifest that the opinion of the worshippers, of their being the *offspring* of the gods whom they deemed it their interest to serve, could not operate as a motive to obedience. But the *monotheist* is compelled, by the nature of his faith, to consider the God whom he worships, as the *universal creator*; and this belief introduces a more intimate connexion with the great le-

gislator whom he obeys, than could have been supposed by the heathen world. In consequence of this connexion, new inducements, new ties, new obligations, to the love and practice of virtue, present themselves.

The considerations, which hitherto have been advanced as motives, however rational and refined some of them may appear, are all to be resolved into that principle of action which has good in *prospect*. These motives imply that weak man is wise and prudent to look up to a superior director, to lead and befriend him in the midst of the dangers and difficulties from which he cannot escape; and to confer blessings which he cannot insure to himself. But such motives are still founded upon the idea of a *compact*. Both rewards and punishments are expected according to stipulated conditions. Obedience is still considered as an indication of the greatest prudence, and disobedience as the excess of folly.

But when this Being is considered as the *source of our existence*; without whose creative energy a state of consciousness, and of enjoyment would have been unknown, the most interesting and delightful of all connexions, that of *filiation*, takes place. The motives from example and analogy, which had such a baneful influence among pagans,

when they ascribed vicious passions and depraved propensities to their gods, will now become influential to the practice of the sublimest virtues; for we now suppose that the Creator has the dispositions of a wise and benevolent *parent* towards his beloved offspring. The veneration and respect which every human being, who is not in the last stage of depravity, entertains for the author of his days, is a bright pattern to the monotheist, and furnishes him with a powerful incitement to obey the commands, and imitate the example of the great and universal parent. He now contemplates the deity, not as a foreign or incidental cause of some occasional good, but as the *father* of beings rendered by himself capable of enjoying good; as the immediate source of all the good they can possibly enjoy; as the universal and incessant purveyor for a numerous and beloved offspring; directing their steps, instituting a mental discipline, that they may be qualified to act worthy of their high destination, and enjoy, in a more advanced stage of their existence, to the extent of their improved powers. If existence be in itself desirable—and that it is, every individual acknowledges who is not under some dreadful passion, or reduced to the depth of despair;—if there be any thing in life capable of imparting enjoyment; if there be

any valuable blessings in expectation, or any pleasure in the indulgence of hope; the pious offspring of heaven ascribes all to the beneficence of the universal father. He no longer views obedience simply in the light of a compact, but as arising naturally from the relation of a son to his parent. He considers every injunction as a necessary prerequisite to future advancement; and the practice of virtue as a preparatory occupation to qualify him for future well-being: vice is deemed a disqualification, as well as deserving of chastisement. Personal prudence is now associated with love and gratitude. The obedience is that of a *son*, as well as of a *subject*; and a refined sense of justice, is blended with the perception of advantage. A good son cheerfully acknowledges that a debt is contracted by his continually receiving blessings; and where, through the dignity and dependence of the benefactor, or the magnitude of the blessings, no adequate returns can be made, those of *love* and *gratitude* become peculiarly obligatory. As long as he continues to exist, and is eager to enjoy the various blessings of life, the moral theist thinks himself compelled, by the laws of equity, to comply with every injunction proposed by the author of his existence. Disobedience is not merely considered as an imprudence,

but as an *ingratitude* of the basest kind; as an *insult* committed against the Being, by whose bounty we are constantly sustained. Such motives to obedience are completely purified from the sordidness of interested considerations. For although gratitude be always excited by benefits received, yet they *are received,* and are no longer in *expectation*; and obedience consists more of a generous attempt to return the obligation, than of the interestedness of a compact.

Sentiments of the existence, attributes, and plans of deity like the above, contain the most extensive and most powerful inducements to practise virtue, that the imagination can possibly devise. They respect particulars, each of which is in itself calculated to produce some influence; and perverse must be that heart by which their united force can be habitually resisted! They have moreover the exclusive privilege of harmonizing in the most perfect manner, with all the other principles of action which have already passed under examination; and of augmenting the force of them all, without the most distant appearance of discordancy.

Such sentiments of Religion, as we have stated,

clearly point out *where* the truest Interest lies. They direct self-love into its proper channel. They indicate the extent and boundaries, within which the exercise of self-love is conformable to propriety, and meets with the approbation of the worthy and respectable among men. For they effectually prevent the abuse of this principle to the injury, either of ourselves or of others; while they encourage the fullest indulgence of it, as far as innocence, prudence, and discretion, will authorize. They filtrate from self-interest that sordidness with which it is generally mixed. They unite with the social principle; by instructing us to *rejoice*,—which is a pleasing state of mind,—in the welfare of others; and they point out the only method, by which self-love and social may become the same. They authorize the expectation of a full indemnity, where duty is connected with great sacrifices, which could not have been made; and with sufferings which would not have been endured, from any other motive, without the entire eradication of self-love; or the extravagant transfer of our own happiness to others, without the expectation of an equivalent. Upon religious principles, every sacrifice that is made, is considered as a duty, and becomes a voluntary obligation on the altar of religion; and the full assurance of

its being acceptable, renders it pleasant: and thus the man of piety receives in his sacrifices and self-denials, a much greater recompense than the apparent prosperity of a contracted spirit, can possibly bestow.

Obedience to the laws of such a sovereign, approves itself to the *Reason* of every one who believes in his existence. To acknowledge his being, that he possesses such attributes, and sustains so important a relation with his intelligent offspring, and yet to refuse obedience, is the excess of irrationality. The duties enjoined are the most rational in themselves; his right to enforce them cannot be disputed; and they are productive of the greatest possible good to each individual. The rational theist acknowledges the truth of all these propositions. He believes in the being of a God, whose moral character and conduct, do not offend the principles of reason in the minutest point. He admits that there is a perfect correspondence between the excellences of the divine character, and the precepts enjoined by him; and he is convinced that every injunction is indispensably requisite, for the enjoyment of the most exalted and most permanent blessings. If happiness be desirable in itself, that obedience which is required of mortals in order to secure and promote it, must be the most rational of all services.

The above sentiments of religion have a natural tendency to strengthen, refine, and direct the *social principle*. The pious moralist perceives that many classes of inferior beings are placed in a situation, where they are capable of receiving much good from the hands of men, while they administer to his comfort and support. But he loves the human species as the offspring of the same God, children of the same family, embarked in the same cause, destined to similar trials, agitated by similar fears, and encouraged by similar hopes; and he exercises the duties of justice towards them, with all the cordiality of friendship *.

This extensive view of the sociability of our nature, which religion authorizes, effectually destroys those minute associations formed in defiance of virtue. It will admit of no bye-laws which religion does not sanction. The maxims of conduct towards every individual, being founded upon the principles of integrity and philanthropy, social intercourse is not checquered by different clusters of animosities and friendships; or circumscribed by narrow principles and perverse dispositions. Enlarged conceptions of duty, founded on ration-

* See Note G.

al piety, break down those wretched mounds which contracted minds have raised, to interrupt the currents of universal good, and divert the streamlets into their partial communities; and they totally discountenance those false principles of honour, which are at variance with reason, justice, and humanity, and an opprobrium to every one who claims the character of a moral agent. Although the Moralist, whose virtues are strengthened by religious principles, be not ignorant of the great advantages derived from cherishing the social affections, and may wish to enjoy, as well as to deserve, the good opinion of his brethren, yet he will not make the applause of men his primary object; much less will he seek it by mean and servile compliances: But he will enjoy the approbation of the worthy with self-complacence, from a consciousness that it is the recompense of his having been actuated by nobler motives.

It is no less evident that those rational principles of religion, which strengthen the bonds of virtuous intercourse, are peculiarly calculated to cherish the *benevolent affections*, to the utmost extent. The intimacy of our relation to each other; our exalted station as vicegerents of heaven over the inferior creation, the example, the character, the commands of a beneficent deity, unite to en-

force the duties of benevolence in all their ramifications.

They also place the *excellence* and *beauty* of virtue in the most attractive point of view. The lover of virtue perceives, that his warmest admiration of moral excellence, is *approved by heaven.* He knows that his superior discernment and exalted feelings, are not subjected to the usual caprices of taste, for they are consonant to the rules and the model of a perfect unerring judge; and he is conscious, that the more he loves virtue, the more nearly does he imitate his God.

We will not disgrace the divine authority, by a minute comparison of it with any *human laws*; or attempt a parallel between the immutable laws of heaven, and the imperfect and versatile legislation of men; to which states and kingdoms are compelled to submit; which are frequently void of wisdom, when the intention may be beneficent; which sometimes authorize oppression, when they aim at being just; are cruel when they are intended to be wise; and too often manifest the caprices of power, without the least mixture of wisdom or goodness. Those who obey the laws of God, feel not the servility of bowing to an usurper, but the freedom of subjects who serve the so-

vereign of their choice; and who has purchased a right to their obedience, by benefits perpetually conferred. They admire in the divine laws, the wisdom and goodness which seek to diffuse the most extensive advantages over innumerable beings, instead of being founded upon a narrow policy, or promoting local interest. They perceive in the sanctions of the divine laws, the prevalence of benignity over severity; and that the punishments by which they are protected, are not only founded on the strictest equity, but are calculated to secure the greatest good, through the extensive empire of the universal sovereign.

We perceive from these investigations, that, as obedience to the laws of morality, is of more extensive importance than obedience to any human laws, so are its sanctions more numerous and varied; they are also admirably adapted to every state and situation, in which the subject can possibly be placed. They are not only operative upon the principle of self-interest, in common with every law, but they modify and refine this self-interest, until it become subservient to the good of others. They are so equitable and so rational, that the most refractory spirit cannot find a

pretext for rebellion, or disobey without being self-condemned. The punishments strike the mind with peculiar awe, though their nature and extent be unknown; and its rewards are most encouraging, though undefined. They are obligatory upon man, both as an individual and as a social being; and the mind that is duly trained to habits of obedience, finds increasing delight in the service.

CHAP. III.

INQUIRY INTO THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF VIRTUOUS DISPOSITIONS, AND RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS IN THE HUMAN MIND.

IN our chapter on the progressive Nature of Well-being *, we have endeavoured to trace the gradations which exist in our pursuits and powers of enjoyment. It was observed that those objects which strike the senses most strongly, administering to our animal wants, and animal gratifications, are the first that attract the attention, and engross the thoughts of uncultivated minds; that the enjoyments of a superior and most satisfactory kind, are obtained last, according to the regular process of things; and that many intermediate steps must be taken, and much intermediate good may be enjoyed, before we arrive at a more exalted stage of human happiness. A progression not dissimilar, is observable respecting the influence of virtuous and religious principles on the mind.

Whether the depravity acknowledged and la-

* See Vol. II. p. 399.

mented, in the world of moral agents, be the effect of an original taint, (as some theologians maintain) or whether it can be fully explained, upon the principles advanced in the preceding volume, does not belong to the present subject. That there is much depravity existing in the human species, and in the human species *alone*, must be admitted; but the enquiry before us is, when the human mind is plunged into this degraded state; when depravity has prevailed to a deplorable degree, and every moral sentiment appears to be extinguished; from what principle in our nature is the commencement of a reform to be expected? or by what train of thought and sensations, are we to expect progressive improvement in virtuous and pious dispositions and affections?

It is natural to suppose that rude minds can only be worked upon in a rough manner. The paucity of their ideas, the shallowness of their knowledge, the slowness of their comprehension, and the grossness of their habits, must render them insensible to the more refined and respectable motives of action. Self-interest, ill understood, they have to a great degree, and incessantly operative. The reasonableness of one mode of conduct, and unreasonableness of its opposite, will seldom, if ever, be suggested by

their own reflections, and will be received with indifference when suggested by others. Their sociability may be very contracted; and with some dispositions, it seems more to be the occasion of quarrels and animosities, than of mutual benefits. If their good-will extend to their own offspring, and occasionally to an adjacent neighbour, it is all that can be expected; and as to the beauty of virtue, they will gaze with astonishment when it is mentioned. Respecting persons of this description, it is natural to suppose, that the strongest passion in the human breast, will be the first to operate against their strong and inveterate propensities, with any prospect of success; and observation confirms the supposition.

Admitting self-interest to be prior, in its influence, to every social principle, it will be equally allowed that *fear* or *dread*, is able to lay the strongest hold upon self-interest *. In the hour of imminent danger, the prevailing idea of good, is to escape from the impending evil. Terror is the acutest of all our mental sensations; nor can those under its influence, be diverted from its exciting cause, by any other object. While under the impression of dread, the most pleasing or beneficial acquisitions, however ardently they may have been desired in a more placid state of mind,

* See Note H.

lose all their attractions. The only wish is to *escape*; and that tranquil station which once appeared indifferent to us or insipid, now appears to contain every possible good. Terror has been known to humble the pride of the proudest, to make the arrogant and supercilious fawn upon those whom they used to insult; and servilely flatter the oppressors whom they detest. The most ferocious miscreants, when brought to condign punishment, with the terrors of death before their eyes, appear suddenly to have changed their natures, by the mild submission of their behaviour, and the marks of contrition they discover.

We may also remark, that the obedience of rude and undisciplined children, to the commands of their parents and superiors, is wholly founded on fear. The dread of corporal punishment, or of anger, are their sole restraints from doing wrong, or inducements to execute the orders which oppose their inclinations. When they are actuated by any other motive, even by the hopes of a reward, they have advanced a step in the path of mental culture; they are on the road which leads out of servility; for in this case the prevalent idea is that of a bargain, and not of a duty; if they would renounce the promised recompense, they still would think themselves free to disobey. But the idea of freedom is totally lost, where there is

absolute compulsion. Under the apprehensions of severe chastisement, they feel that they have not a will of their own. Refractory youths also, whose evil habits have been nourished by domestic indulgences, or by the seductions of bad company; and who had resisted the earnest intreaties or remonstrances of the most affectionate parents; have finally been chastised into obedience, when given over to the discipline of severe masters; or placed in situations that inspire them with the conviction, that there is no avoiding deserved punishment, but by obedience. The whole force of selfishness will now compel them to become obsequious and tractable.

The next principle that is operative, is Hope. The prospect of something very pleasing, or of some desirable compensation, is calculated to call forth the energies of the soul in its earliest exertions. Hope will not, at once, be sufficient entirely to change a perverse character; for no bribe will be equal to the prospect of vicious gratifications; but it may occasionally induce a person to abstain from his purpose, and will frequently excite him to the performance of various detached actions. The ardent expectation of supplying a particular want, or of superadding to their stock, will stimulate the sluggish to make exertions, and prove the commencement of a salutary self-de-

nial. It is this which subdues the native indolence of the savage, and prompts him to an activity the most opposite to his natural propensities. Where the habits are strong, and the propensities to be opposed very great, it is a first requisite that the expected advantages should be proximate. As barbarians are said to count but few units before their contracted intellects are lost in confusion, thus in morals, contracted minds cannot easily anticipate distant benefits, though great and manifold. The recompense must be immediate, in order to encourage exertions.

When this compensation is able to kindle desire, it becomes next in its influence to the passion of fear. But *Hope* is a motive of a very superior quality. The prevalent idea, in this case, is an *augmentation of good,* which certainly expands the mind more than the dread of suffering. The agent is also more conscious of his own free agency, in the performance of every act of self-denial, than when impelled by fear; and this perception, united with the prospect of good to be enjoyed, inspires a cheerfulness and alacrity of temper, which is in itself a reward, instead of that dejection of spirit, which distinguishes a slave, and which cannot lay the most distant claim to merit, or enjoyment.

In the infancy of obedience, even from this motive, it is probable that the mind will be indifferent respecting the moral nature of the injunction. Its only desire may be to surmount difficulties, and obtain the recompense. But difficulties surmounted, prepare and dispose for future exertions; and advantages obtained, inspire satisfaction. They introduce also the perception of a *meliorated* state. New desires are excited; new hopes are encouraged. Obedience becomes *facile,* and facility communicates the pleasures of habit. If the injunctions refer to any principles of an intellectual or moral nature, a profitable association takes place; and what was at first performed with a reluctance, which the hope of a reward alone could subdue, may, in the process of obedience, become itself a reward. A delight in exertions rendered familiar by habit, may also be accompanied with a grateful perception of something excellent. This perception ennobles and dignifies the service in the opinion of the agent; and it will commence, or quicken, a desire after intellectual or moral improvement. When this degree of progress is obtained, a pleasing sense of something *honourable,* of having performed something *good,* and a consciousness of *desert* inspiring *self-complacency,* will greatly augment the pleasures of the service. Obedience now becomes

more vigorous and accurate, than could have been expected from the mere impulse of fear; or even from the mercenary principle of a reward conferred by the superior.

The next operative affection we shall mention, is that of Love. Love, personal attachments, and preferences, are first inspired by a perception of benefits communicated by the object, and enjoyed by the subject. Minds, unaccustomed to reason, cannot be impressed with abstract ideas of moral excellence, deserving of affection; these are known to exist only by specific acts, and frequent emanations. The infant mind, however, feels the force of an argument without the aid of syllogisms, and quickly learns to infer, "there must be something good in the person who is always doing good to me." We readily acquire attachments to *inanimate* objects, possessing the power of communicating pleasure; and social attachments are more readily formed, by the attractive blandishments accompanying kind actions, united with the early influence of the social principle. The infant immediately gives a preference to its attentive nurse, whose fostering care incessantly places her before its eyes, and who is the only ostensible source of all its comforts and enjoyments. Whatever may have been advanced respecting the στοργη, or instinctive sympathy of blood,

the instances seldom occur which favour that hypothesis, compared with the innumerable examples of preferences given to the constant and affectionate attendant; to the no small mortification of the parent, the instrumental cause of its existence, and the provider of every comfort.

The natural consequences of strong personal attachments, are a desire of reciprocation, and assiduous attempts to obtain the good opinion and affectionate regards, of the person beloved. Obedience from this motive, becomes a source of still greater pleasure than can be imparted by any other cause; and it is uniform, minute, and extensive in its effects. A solicitude is now implanted, not merely to obey injunctions, but to anticipate wishes; to study the pleasure of a benefactor, and to surprize by some unexpected token of affection *.

Repeated acts of kindness will be considered by the recipient, upon the first dawn of reflexion, as indubitable marks of a beneficent disposition; and to the gratitude excited by repeated favours, are added habitual love and esteem for the friend and benefactor, which may rise to admiration. If

* See disquisition on the Sources of Well-being, § iv. p. 316, for the developement of the principles on which these observations are founded.

the benefactor be our superior in age, station, power, and understanding, various degrees of respect, veneration, awe, reverence, are engrafted upon the esteem entertained for his estimable qualities. These, uniting some portion of fear with our love and gratitude, inspire the greater caution against the commission of an offence. But fear, thus connected and modified, instead of retaining its servile nature, becomes amiable and liberal; and the self-love upon which it is founded, becomes refined and ennobled. Under the genuine influence of such principles, the only fear is, that of losing the affections of the object beloved, and the chief reward in contemplation, is that of cordial approbation ‡.

When love, gratitude, respect, and an earnest desire of reciprocal affection, are deeply seated in the mind, they impress it with the utmost sorrow and regret, upon being conscious of having given offence; or of having acted unworthily, either through inadvertency, peculiar temptation, or the sudden impulse of passion; and these will rise to the most painful self-reproaches, according to the aggravations that may surround the offence. But however agonizing this state of mind, and

‡ See Complacential Affections, vol. i. ch. iii. articles Esteem, Respect, &c.

however it may inflict self-condemnation, it is still an indubitable proof, that, notwithstanding such reproachful aberrations, great advances are made in virtuous dispositions and principles. Sordid dread begins with self and ends with self. Its sole anxiety consists in a solicitude to escape punishment; and it is a stranger to every other reflection.

Love commencing with those, whose benevolent affections have an immediate claim, and whose constant assiduities win the heart, naturally expands towards those who are within the sphere of social intercourse, unless it be checked by something peculiarly forbidding in their appearance or conduct. Attentions and engaging manners, will soon remove the instinctive shyness of a child, and teach the young pupil that the apparent strangers are *friends*, and not objects of terror; which is generally the first impression made by absolute strangers. They will thus be inspired with a degree of confidence; and confidence will quickly be succeeded, by the perception of many engaging and attractive qualities.

The circle may enlarge in a similar manner, until it embrace the neighbourhood. Mutual benefits derived from increasing intimacies by social intercourse, and the discovery of amiable dispositions, and respectable qualities, where they were

not supposed to exist, gradually remove personal prejudices, which ignorance had cherished; implant a conviction that there is something good in others, as well as in ourselves and in our most intimate connexions, and thus prepare the mind for a more favourable opinion of the human species; until it be at length discovered, that other men are, in the essential principles of human nature, merely exemplars of ourselves; possessing similar feelings, actuated by similar motives, agitated by similar passions, liable to similar prejudices, exposed to similar infirmities, capable of similar virtues; whose infirmities may be entitled to apologies similar to those we are disposed to make for ourselves, and whose virtues may possibly exceed our own.

We intend not to intimate, that the above is a sketch of the process which takes place in every individual mind. It is most fortunate that, in numberless instances, a sense of duty, and a disposition to obey wise and salutary injunctions, are formed in an imperceptible manner. In decent and intelligent families, and in well-regulated societies, where the best examples precede or accompany instruction, where the benefits derived from every thing orderly and lovely are felt, before reason and reflection are in vigorous exercise, the impressions of terror, and the servility of compulsion, will be utterly unknown; and the

and the more generous fear of offending from a principle of love, may be the only painful sensation. Yet it may be alledged, that even this happy state is the result of a process, which had taken place at some former period; before the thoughts and dispositions of well-ordered families, or of highly civilized communities, were arrived to this degree of perfection. As the ancestors of our most illustrious families were once plebeians; and the most elegant accomplishments, are but refinements from a vulgarity of manners which once existed, thus the more generous, and more noble principles of action, which appear so natural and easy to men of exalted virtue, are but the refinements and filtrations of those which were formerly more gross, selfish, and servile.

A process of a similar kind is observable as the human race, emerging from a more rude and barbarous state, advances towards civilization. The social principle, at first, operates within very narrow limits. It commences with family connexions or with smaller societies, who appear to have a common interest; who are closely united by the perception of some mutual advantage, or of the pleasures derived from social intercourse.

With these clusters, the social virtues commence. Such communities will be strictly faithful, honest, and accommodating to each other. They are actuated by the same principle, and seem to be animated by one soul; unless some cause of contention should occasionally intervene. But this powerful attraction of the individual members to each other, renders them in a great degree repulsive towards such communities, as are most proximate, but without the limits of their particular sphere. These detached associations confine their ideas of duty and moral obligation, each within their own circle. In the disputes with neighbouring districts, which so frequently rise from jealousies, supposed insults, or acts of injustice, every quarrel becomes a common cause. Every injury, or insult, which an individual member may have received, is resented by the whole of his associates, against the whole body of the opposite community. They become inveterate against each other, without paying the least attention to the moral nature of the offence, or to the grand principle of justice. Public spirit, and a sense of public justice, now consists in being faithful to their own townsmen, clan, or cast, or hordes, or in generous exertions to defend or promote their interest. It is an adopted principle, that no injustice can possibly be committed against a declared enemy. To gain

every advantage by any means in their power, is true policy; and to punish injuries to the utmost extent of power, is not only lawful, but indispensably requisite. To pardon, is considered as an infringement upon the common right of revenge; and a conciliatory spirit is ascribed to pusillanity, or to the low intrigues of cowardice.

The same principles, and a similar mode of conduct, extend from lesser associations to greater; from clans and hordes to kingdoms and empires. The constituted laws of larger communities are founded on self-preservation, or aggrandisement. An attachment to the state, justifies, in the opinion of sovereigns and their subjects, the employment of every means of destruction that can be devised or invented; and the practise of every art that can seduce, deceive, or ensnare. Such are the maxims of conduct in every nation upon the globe; though with various degrees of animosity and resentment, according to the adventitious circumstances, which may have created some difference in national characters. In a state of warfare, the applause of the country, self-approbation, disgrace, and shame, are regulated by them. In the earlier periods of society, the human mind appears to be entirely absorbed by these ideas. No conceptions are formed either of justice or of mercy, much less

of benevolence towards a stranger or an enemy. The nations which have been, in subsequent ages, distinguished for their urbanity and their polish, were originally a band of robbers. Herodotus informs us, that this was the origin of the Grecian states. Revenge for the infamous conduct of an individual, is said to have been the destruction of Troy. The wild Arabs think themselves fully entitled to plunder the caravans of strangers, and to commit murder in case of resistance. Savage nations make war, even to extirpation if possible; leaving dreadful revenge as a legacy to posterity. But in the midst of this barbarous conduct, the notions of social virtue, within their own circle, are strong and impressive. Their rude minds have the most faithful attachments: they are just and honourable to each other: they display undaunted courage in the face of danger; and endure, with insulting patience, the severest torments that can be inflicted by an enraged foe. The banditti and pirates of some countries, and the associated thieves of others, feel the necessity of observing the strictest justice, and of acting upon the principles of liberality. They have in their perverted and degraded state, such an exalted sense of honour and integrity, as is a reproach to those who look down upon them with horror.

Although the above facts may not give us the

most favourable opinion of human nature, they are founded upon a principle, the developement of which may finally be productive of the social virtues, to the utmost extent of their lenient and beneficent influence. The most circumscribed associations, and the narrowest bonds of union, confess that man cannot possibly enjoy life in an isolated state. He cannot exist in perpetual solitude. The human species have not only, in common with all other animals, a natural attachment to each other, but mutual interest demands mutual intercourse; and such is the constitution of our nature, that it is not difficult to *purchase mutual good-will by mutual acts of kindness.* It is this disposition which forms the harmony of the smallest circles; and events, which have a tendency to enlarge these circles, though they may be rude and injurious in their first operations, induce other events, which are highly favourable to extensive civilization. The wars and contentions commenced with savage hatred, if they do not absolutely extirpate the opposing clans, or nations, have a tendency to introduce a similarity of manners, and remove that shy disinclination to intercourse, which was one cause of enmity. The Subjugated receive the laws, and gradually adopt the customs of the conquerors; and although re-

duced to a state of dependence, hurtful to their feelings, they become in some degree partakers of the good-will of their masters. By lenient treatment, they are finally incorporated with the triumphant community; and they feel themselves to be members of the same body, though destined to inferior services. Their vanquishers perceive, that it is more to their interest to treat them as *subjects*, than exterminate them as *foes*; and thus are they secured from further injuries. The conquests of Alexander, and the whole Roman history, may be considered as histories of this process. The American Indians are reported to calculate advantages so wisely, that when the population of their tribes has been greatly diminished, by the devastations of war, they will not destroy or torture their prisoners, according to their usual practice, but adopt them into their tribe, and give them all the advantages of denizens. In numerous instances have the savage extirminating dispositions of of the most cruel conquerors, been molified by a bribe. The redemption of life and liberty, by large pecuniary mulcts, by ceding towns and provinces, softens the rigour of what they deem *vindictive justice*; and the sovereigns who have not learned to remit punishments, from the nobler motives of generosity and mercy, will not scruple to

sacrifice their abstract conceptions of personal justice to their immediate interests.

Similar effects of social benefit, arising from self-interest, are sometimes obvious in civil life, and among individuals of the same community; whose animosities may have been very great from some adventitious cause, either of a religious or political nature; and who may have construed mutual hatred into a laudable zeal for the important cause espoused. Their resentments have, in process of time, been softened down, by the fortunate discovery of some object or bond of mutual interest, which renders mutual toleration desireable to each party. They will unite in order to resist an enemy more formidable to both, than they are to each other. The man of business will cease to examine, wirh a rigid minuteness, into the religious or political creeds of those, with whom he wishes to form commercial associations, which promise profit or opulence. The operations of self-interest, ultimately soften those wrathful and revengeful principles which characterize savage manners; and which often disgrace more civilised societies, until some desireable bond of union shall finally present itself.

Thus in larger, or in smaller circles, the prospects of advantage become powerful antidotes to destructive and pernicious prejudices. The expansion of every species of utility, breaks down the mounds of separation, and enlarges the sphere of benevolence. Whatever promotes peaceful intercourse among nations, destroys the national animosities fostered by ignorance. Strangers begin to look at each other without horror; conceive that they may be of the same species; and finally associate as friends. The more frequent the intercourse, provided it be conducted with integrity and honour, the readier will suspicions give way to confidence and respect.

This is the natural tendency and prime advantage of extensive commerce. An interchange of benefits, although commencing in self-interest, generates affection. The rich fruits of good-will, thus produced, are of more intrinsic value than any other treasures ; they far exceed the choicest of all commercial exports or imports. The promotion of reciprocal interests is now preferred to plans of destruction ; the blessings of peace take place of the miseries of war and devastation; the voice of rejoicing succeeds to the groans of the wounded, the lamentations of the ruined, and the wailings of widows and orphans.

Were not our attention chiefly confined, in the present inquiry, to the progressive operations of natural causes upon the mind, in its slow cultivation of the social virtues, we might also advert to the beneficial influence of Christianity. By spreading the important doctrine of pure theism, it has collected the different classes of mankind under one universal sovereign, and taught them to believe that their duties and expectations are similar. By the equity and benevolence of its precepts, and the attractive example of its founder, moral principles have been more widely diffused; and milder dispositions have been cultivated, even by vulgar minds, than were known to exist among persons of the same class in the heathen world. Cruel sports and pastimes have been abolished; nor is abject slavery so universal. The periodical dissemination of moral and religious principles from the pulpit, and even from the press, has formed a popular fund of knowledge, which is gradually humanizing the heart. The influence of that excellent religion might have been infinitely more extensive, had not its professors and teachers, halted so long upon metaphysical questions, and stirred up all the angry passions of their admirers, as well as their own, by incessantly engaging in polemical contests.

By the union of the above causes, the various classes of men, notwithstanding the diversities of nations, distinctions in governments, differences in religious and political sentiments which still subsist, begin to respect each other. They have subdued the injurious shyness of strangers, and are disposed to communicate reciprocal benefits. It is pleasant to observe, that when disputes arise between nations, from the supposed opposition of interests, earnest endeavours are exerted to reconcile differences, before an appeal is made to the sword. The amicable temper, cultivated in peaceful seasons, has taken root, and subsists amidst the horrors of war. Subjects begin to dread, instead of encouraging, the ambition of their sovereigns. Those whose profession is military, or who are compelled to engage in the contest, discharge their duty with intrepid firmness, but the savage fierceness which characterised former periods, gives way to the claims of mercy; and the subdued are treated with commiseration. The subjects of contending nations begin to sympathise with each others distresses, with a strength of feeling that attempts to relieve. May we not hope, by the progressive cultivation of such happy dispositions, that the ambition of sovereigns will finally be checked and subdued; that the pride, and extra-

vagant claims of rival nations, will give place to moderation and equity; and that mutual concessions of minuter importance, will purchase the incalculable advantages of perpetual amity?

In the above, we have endeavoured to trace the progress of the social virtues, by the natural operations of different passions and affections of the human mind; in consequence of which it expands from the contractedness of self, until communities at large become partakers of its affections, complacences, and benevolent wishes. Commencing, in its more abject state, with the servile passion of fear, it proceeds to hope; and by the reception of kind treatment, it gradually acquires personal attachments, with dispositions to perform correspondent duties. It is also manifest, that the narrow boundaries of particular societies, which distinguished ruder ages, are giving place to far more liberal principles; and that the false and contracted notions of separate and irreconcileable interests, will not always prove an obstacle to universal benevolence.

There is another passion, the beneficial effects

of which are merely personal; but its influence in promoting the private or personal virtue of individuals, is too great not to demand our notice: the passion, or affection of SORROW.

We have considered Sorrow *, as expressive of a mental suffering, under the privation of some good, either in possession or expectation. Sorrow may proceed from adventitious circumstances, over which we have no controul; from the behaviour of others, or from our own misconduct. When we are conscious that what we suffer, was occasioned by any improper actions or negligences of ourselves, sorrow assumes the character of repentance; consisting of various degrees, from simple displacency or dissatisfaction with ourselves, to all the horrors of contrition and remorse. It is the peculiar characteristic of sorrow to render us thoughtful; and we have already remarked, that the pathological influence of the passion upon the animal system, corresponds with its final cause. Afflictions of every kind are replete with useful instruction. Some important lesson is always to be learned from them; and sorrow best disposes the mind to receive instruction, by the calm melancholy which succeeds to the first transports of the passion. We now ad-

* Vol. I. article Sorrow.

vert to the state in which we were before the calamity arrived; compare it with the present; feel and bewail the difference. We are convinced, by the unexpected privation, that there was more good in our former state, than our thoughtless minds had conceived; and this may induce a grateful habit of valuing our blessings, while they are in our possession. If the evils that befal us were totally independent of our powers of prevention, sorrow disposes us to direct our choice, and place our affections, upon more secure and permanent good. If we have been unintentionally accessory, we become disposed to enquire what share we had in the event; what line of conduct conduced to it; and in what manner it might have been avoided. In cases of direct culpability, we are taught that the objects of pursuit were improper, the motives unlawful, the means inadequate, or the manner rash and precipitate. Hence we acquire beneficial experience; are disposed and enabled, to make a wiser choice, and to act upon better principles in the future. If sorrows arise from events, which may have made an essential change in our state; should we be reduced from affluence to penury, from freedom to bondage, or from an exalted to a more humble station, we are taught the uncertainty of that species

of good, which perhaps had occupied our whole attention, and for which, possibly, we had sacrificed the best principles of the human heart. If we vainly boasted of our exalted station, or assumed haughty and supercilious airs, from a persuasion of our superior talents or merit, we shall now perceive the greatness of our error. We shall now learn, that it was our *station*, or *affluence*, and not *ourselves*, which commanded such appearances of profound respect, and such flattering attentions from others. We shall find that nothing was *our own*; and that all our glory consisted in the gaze and admiration of those very beings, whom we treated with contempt. Thus may we become proficients in the important science of *self-knowledge*, in a manner by no means flattering, but highly advantageous to our future interests.

We attempted to prove, in a former volume, that all the irregular passions may be ascribed to ignorance, the powerful influence of present objects, and inordinate self-love; and the sorrow, and anguish of heart which frequently succeed to these irregularities, promise to be the best preservatives against a relapse into former follies. If ignorance were involuntary, we are yet taught va-

luable knowledge by *experience*; which, of all others, is the most impressive instructor. If ignorance were the result of carelessness and inattention, self-reproach accompanying sorrow, will exert its influence to quicken future attention. By the melancholy consequences which too frequently succeed to our being fascinated, with the deceitful allurements of present objects, we are fully instructed, that their allurements *are* deceitful; that by yielding to their seductions, we are bartering away permanent peace and happiness, for the transient unsatisfactory gratifications of sense; or by the rash transports of anger, we destroy, in a moment, all the enjoyments of our social intercourse.

We have, in another place *, amply considered the pernicious effects of inordinate self-love, and have shewn, that as it is more culpable, and more dangerous in its excesses, than either of the preceding causes, it is also much more difficult to be restrained, or subjugated. It is deaf to the voice of reason, to the claims of justice, or the cries of misery. It is arrogant, revengeful, and implacable. Although the sordid nature of this principle be an impediment to all rational enjoyment;

* See Vol. II. p. 133.

though it sacrifice every thing that is generous and worthy, and is a stranger to the endearments of every social affection; though its predominant sensations be pride, anger, and perpetual discontent, yet to these it must submit; for a selfish disposition has no corrective from *within*. Of such a character the only remedy is from *without*, in the guise of an *affliction*; and the deeper the affliction the more promising the cure. The sufferings of adverse fortune, and a long train of disappointments, are highly necessary to chase away the dreams of superiority, and of an uncontrouled empire over our associates. The reverses of fortune prove that the power of the Mightiest is not innate; and that they merely act by a force that is servilely granted to them by others; that affluence is but a casual accumulation of the means of good, liable to dissipation; and that to be placed in the most elevated station, is to stand upon a pillar liable to be overthrown. Such calamities prove, to the most haughty, their dependence upon their inferiors; and may humble their pride, until they gladly receive a boon from those whom they once despised. Afflictions have been known to soften the hardest heart into sympathy with the afflicted; and to render those who were most insolent when in prosperity, humble and submissive when in a

state of adversity. It has introduced them into an acquaintance with characters infinitely superior to their own. They perceive that others possess the goodness of heart, of which they are destitute; and they are roused to a grateful astonishment, at acts of kindness, from the neglected and injured, as unexpected as they were undeserved.

Uninterrupted prosperity has a pernicious influence upon the heart. Overweening *Self* is always disposed to interpret our good fortune into superior personal worth, or superior abilities; and these it often claims, to the total exclusion of friends and coadjutors, whose kindly aids are soon effaced from the memory, or placed below their true level, as much as our own deserts are raised above it. Hence the absurd ideas of absolute independence, and their concomitants, arrogance and ingratitude. On the other hand, so peculiarly efficacious are afflictions, producing the genuine workings of sorrow, in its various gradations, that perhaps, no truly virtuous and amiable character was ever formed, without being somewhat trained up in this school. It abounds with information, which becomes the more impressive by its being purchased by our own experience. It teaches self-knowledge, so essential to self-government. It points out where wisdom

dwells, and disposes to listen to her counsels: it softens the heart into sympathy with others: it is peculiarly calculated to call forth and strengthen the passive virtues of patience, submission, resignation, humility, and the practice of moderation in all things. Great afflictions have a tendency to diminish the morbid influence of more trivial sufferings, that were formerly so irritating, and to augment our esteem for the consolations which are yet in our power.

A process in the operations of the passions, somewhat similar to the above, is sometimes observable in a change of dispositions and conduct, from an abandoned, to a religious course of life. When gross ignorance and depraved morals, are united in the same person; when selfish gratifications appear to have been the sole motives of conduct, and the excess of profligacy seems to bid defiance to reformation, the excitement of *dread*, respecting the divine wrath, has not unfrequently proved most successful. Persons of such a character, being solely governed by selfish motives, alarming representations, which touch this *Self*, more powerfully than the powerful objects of seduction, can alone become a counterpoise to their pernicious influence, or counteract the

depraved dispositions rendered inveterate by habit. Argue with the profligate concerning the irrationality of their conduct; assure them that they are violating the laws of society, and are forfeiting their title to its benefits; explain to them the superior advantages to be derived from the practice of virtue, they will hear you with perfect indifference. Expatiate upon the charms of virtue, they will not comprehend you. They see no charms but in the objects which indulge some vile propensity. Place before them the pernicious consequences attendant upon vicious courses, the poverty and disgrace to which they are exposed; threaten them with the chastisement of the laws, they may begin to listen, perhaps to be convinced; may resolve, struggle, and be again subdued. The present indulgence is immediate; poverty and want appear to be at a remote distance; and as to the terrors of human laws, they entertain the fullest confidence that by artifice, and address, or by the very chicanery of the interpretors of the law, they shall escape its penalties. To persons of this description, the infinitely more awful threatenings of much severer punishments, in a future world, at once terrible and certain; denounced with solemn authority, united with sympathetic concern, are the only probable means of

exciting a salutary alarm, and of inspiring them with all the horrors of remorse. They may thus be impressed with the apprehensions of danger; and be anxious to escape by penitence and reformation. The mind may thus be brought, by the operation of terror, into a state of *subjugation*; into a pliability of temper unknown before; thus it may become prepared for future instructions, in every religious and moral duty; and finally, it may be animated to the practice of virtue, by sublimer motives than those suggested by the servility of fear.

These effects of terror are frequently to be observed upon the minds of condemned criminals. Their nature appears to be instantaneously changed. Blasphemers *now* are terrified at the thoughts of appearing before that Being, whom they have despised. They read; they pray; they seek consolation from the pious. Tempers the most cruel and savage, now assume the appearance of mildness and humility, and profess to die in peace with all mankind. The execution of the awful sentence, leaves us in doubt concerning each individual, whether this anxious state of mind would finally have terminated in pious reformation; and the subsequent relapse of many that have received pardon, greatly augments these doubts.

The affection which, in the natural process of things, succeeds to lively terror, will be the affection of *Hope*. The penitent who has been driven by his fears to seek for pardon, will certainly be influenced by the hopes of obtaining it, or he would sink into the depth of despair.

When he trusts that his peace is made with an offended deity, where a genuine reformation takes place, this affection will introduce the pleasing sensations of *joy* and *gratitude* into his breast. An impressive sense of his infinite obligations, and of benefits, which exceed all thought, and for which no adequate return can possibly be made, will, according to the natural influence of love, joy, and gratitude, quicken in him the spirit of obedience to the divine will, in all the ramifications of obedience. Penitence is no longer excited by the immediate apprehensions of danger alone, but it becomes ingenuous sorrow, at having offended the divine benefactor. The dread and terror which the contemplation of the irresistible power of an offended Being first inspired, are now modified, by a conviction of his infinite benignity, into the profoundest awe and reverence. Love, gratitude, respectful fear, uniting with the strong perception, where true interest lies, will implant an habitual solicitude not to

offend. The consciousness of a relapse into former vices, will be productive of sincere contrition, in which the fear of punishment is no longer the only, or the primary impression. The poignancy of penitence will chiefly consist in the conviction of ingratitude; the perception of failings will inspire humility, calculated to augment caution, and also to suggest motives of patience and resignation, in all the afflictive scenes of life.

The above observations are founded upon the position, that the Subject has been in the lowest state of mental degradation, previously to the influence of any religious motives; that upon the first alarm of terror, his conscience discloses to him numberless evidences of depravity; and that he is convicted, by an inward testimony, of the habitual viciousness of his propensities, and profligacy of his conduct. But such convictions and painful sensations, are not to be expected, where pious precepts and example, have induced virtuous and pious habits and affections, from the early dawn of reason. The subject will entertain a just sense of his own failings, without those terrors which belong to reprobate minds alone. He com-

mences religious duties, at a more advanced stage of the process; and from an earlier period, he will be actuated by the nobler principles of love, gratitude, and filial awe, without those horrors which are the just and corrective punishments of the wicked.

END OF THE ETHICAL TREATISE

NOTES

TO THE

PRECEDING TREATISE.

NOTES

TO THE

PRECEDING TREATISE.

NOTE A.

After "although it primarily respects others and not ourselves." Page 33.

THE terms prudence and discretion, imprudence and indiscretion, may frequently be used with the strictest propriety; but the following example will shew us that cases may occur in which the distinctions we have adopted are of importance. Officious persons will often publish reports, or relate events, which both prudence and discretion should have taught them to conceal. They

were *imprudent*, because the discoveries they made were to their own prejudice; they were *indiscreet* because they gave offence, or were prejudicial to those who had a claim upon their discretion and secrecy. If we feel a greater propriety in this mode of expressing ourselves, than by inverting the phrase; and asserting that a person may be *indiscreet* respecting his own interest, and *imprudent* in doing what may prove offensive to another, the distinction is valid. The degrees of Indiscretion will, in this case, be measured by the greatness of the offence committed, and the force of our obligations to have been more cautious. The degrees of Imprudence will be measured, by the extent of injury to which any one has exposed himself, from the rank, character, power, or resentful dispositions, of the person offended.

Note B.

After "unworthy and pernicious." Page 102.

It is very interesting to trace the gradual changes that have taken place in the signification of the term *virtue*, according to the progress made in knowledge and civilization. In the greek language αρητῆς originally signified *warlike prowess*, and it implied both valour and skill; being derived from ἄρης *Mars*, the God of war; whereas *Bellona* was considered as the goddess of impetuous unbridled courage. Virtue was originally supposed to consist in a spirited and meritorious activity, not in being passive, or even in cultivating the social affec-

tions. Such was the opinion of M. Aurelius, according to the observation of Dr. Beattie. These ideas were derived from the sentiments most prevalent in the earlier state of society, when the principles of general benevolence were but little known; when social attachments were very circumscribed, but yet, from their peculiar strength, they were *instinctively felt* as it were, without being reflected upon as the result of sentiment. A *stranger* was, at these periods, almost synonymous with an *enemy;* nor was an attention to the exigencies of a stranger viewed in the light of a moral duty. Virtue was alone supposed to consist in the exertion of force against an opposing enemy; thus it was considered as nearly allied to prudence, or as a ramification of prudence. No one but a good man, says Aristotle, can be prudent; it is not possible for a man to be properly good, without prudence, nor prudent without moral virtue. αδυνατον φρονιμον εἶναι μὴ οντα αγαθον; ουχ ὅιον αγαθον ειναι κυριως ανευ φρονησεως, ουδε φρονιμον ανευ τῆς ηθικῆς ἀρετῆς. Whatever is operative of good is in the Greek language termed αγαθος. Thus it is expressive of strength, skill, utility, good fortune, integrity, benevolence, and every species of excellence. We may remark also that the adverb κυριως properly signifies authoritative exertion; and *self command*, and ηθικης αρετῆς *moral strength*. The Greeks have also another word expressive of virtue, εγκρἀτεια, *inward strength*, which is obviously more applicable to the virtue of self command, than of prowess. Κρατος which signifies power of any kind, authority, dominion, is also expressive of excellence. The most distinguished and exalted persons, and chiefs,

are called κρατιστοὶ; and the word is frequently used in a connexion which implies pre-eminence.*

The consonance of these sentiments with those advanced in the text is self-evident.

When mankind became more civilized, and philosophers began to study the nature of virtue as a science; the signification of the term was considerably extended. Thus Aristotle divides virtue into intellectual and moral. Of the former kind are Wisdom, Intelligence, Prudence; of the latter, Temperance and Frugality; and other beneficial dispositions of the mind. "When we speak of *morals*, says Aristotle, we do not say a man is *wise* or *intelligent*, but that he is *gentle* and *temperate*. We treat a *wise* man with respect, but *laudable dispositions*, are what we call moral virtues." It is observable that in the above quotation, the idea attached to virtue is confined to its *personal* influence, or solely as it respects the agent.

Cicero proceeds somewhat further. He says, "the virtues of the soul, and of its principal part, the *understanding*, are various; but they may be reduced to two kinds. The first are those which nature has implanted, and which are called involuntary: the second are more properly called virtues, because they depend upon the *will*. These, as objects of approbation, are transcendently superior. Of the former kind are docility, memory, and all the virtues distinguished by the general name of genius, or capacity; the persons possessing them are called ingenious. The latter class comprehends the great and genuine virtues which we deem voluntary, as Prudence,

* See Xen. Cyrop.

Temperance, Fortitude, Justice, and others of the kind."*

From the above quotation we perceive that Cicero did not consider virtue as a quality of a personal influence, *exclusively*. It was admitted to comprehend *Justice*, which is a *social* virtue; and also others of the kind. The moderns confine the signification to those voluntary exertions, which have the production of some specific good for their object, or to the cultivation of the dispositions and affections most influential on well-being: and thus do they entirely separate it from those intellectual powers included in the characteristics given by Cicero; the important office of which is, to direct virtuous dispositions and efforts in a proper manner.

It is observable that the word *virtue* is seldom used either in the old, or new testament; and it is always in a very limited sense. It is in the old testament alone applied to female merit, or to female chastity. Thus Boaz says to Ruth, "all the people of my city doth know that thou art a virtuous woman."† Solomon tells us that a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband; and her price is above rubies." "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." Integrity, Purity, Uprightness, Truth, Righteousness, are the terms uniformly employed to express a proficiency in the moral virtues.

In the english translation of the new testament, there are not more than four or five passages in which the word virtue occurs; and in these it serves to express the signification of two greek words, δυναμις and αρετη. In Mark,

* Cic. de finib. L. 5. C. 13. ex Edit. Davidii. † Ruth, ch. 3. v. 11.

ch. 5. v. 30. it is said "Jesus knew that virtue was gone out of him." ἐπιγνὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ δύναμιν ἐξελθοῦσαν. The Evangelist Luke uses this word also in relating the same miracle. Saint Paul, in his exhortation to the Philippians, thus expresses himself; "finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest,—just,—pure,—lovely,—of good report, if *there be any virtue*, and if there be any praise, think of these things. Phil. ch. 4. v. 8. εἴ τις ἀρετὴ. In the II. Epistle of Peter ch. 1. v. 4. the apostle says, "according as his divine *power*, hath given us all things that pertain unto godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to knowledge and *virtue*." *Power* is here expressed by δυναμις, and *virtue*, by ἀρετὴ. In the 5th verse he adds "and besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith *virtue;* and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance, patience, &c.
ἐν τῇ πίστει ὑμῶν τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀρετῇ τὴν γνῶσιν, &c.

It appears from the above quotations that when δυναμις is translated *virtue*, the term is expressive of a divine energy, of a beneficial nature; and ἀρετη is applied to that moral energy in good men which qualifies them for the acquisition of useful knowledge, and the practice of temperance, patience, &c. Both of these significations illustrate and confirm the assertion, that *virtue* alway implies a beneficial power, notwithstanding the diversities observable in its application.

Note C.

After "That is, as a virtue." Page 109.

The opinions universally entertained concerning the intrinsic nature of virtue and vice, are termed by Epictetus *Preconceptions*. We shall quote his remarks on the frequent misapplication of these preconceptions to specific actions, as they illustrate the position advanced in the text, with humour and vivacity.

"Preconceptions are common to all men; and one preconception does not contradict another. For who does not lay it down as a maxim that good is advantageous and eligible; that justice is fair and becoming? Where then is the dispute? In adapting those preconceptions to particular cases. As when one cries, "Such a person has acted well: he is a gallant man." "No," answers another, "he has acted like a fool." The dispute between Jews, Syrians, Egyptians, Romans, is not whether sanctity be preferable to all things, but whether *eating swine's flesh* be consistent with sanctity or not. This was the dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon. "What say you Agamemnon, ought not that to be done which is fit and right?" "Yes surely Achilles, what say you?" "Yes beyond every thing. Adapt your preconceptions then." Here begins the dispute. One says, it is not fit that I should restore Chryseis to her father." The other says, "Yes but it is." One or the other of them certainly makes a wrong adaptation of the preconception of fitness. Again, "if it be fit, says Achilles, that I should give up Chryseis, it is fit too that I should take some of your prizes."* &c. &c.

* See Mrs. Carter's Epictetus, 4to. ed.

Note D.

After "acclamations of praise." Page 120.

That keen, yet bewildered Philosopher, Mr. Hume, whose superior powers of intellect could penetrate deeply into difficulties, from which his assumed principles could not possibly extricate him, would never have confounded essential differences so grossly, because of slight resemblances, had he considered the extensive production of good, as the best and most rational principle of action in intelligent, social, and moral agents. He would then have smiled at his own puny conceit, that punishing an adversary is Good, *because it gratifies revenge*; and that a desire to put on clean linen is a *virtuous* disposition of equal merit with the most generous action. He would have expressed gratitude to his washerwoman in a more pertinent manner, than by raising her to the same seat with the sublimest moralist!

Note E.

After "And perhaps do not exist." Page 125.

The above distinctions are peculiarly important as they are calculated to have a moral influence. To vague and indiscriminate ideas concerning the nature of merit and demerit, may be ascribed those imprudent and dangerous invectives which are frequently uttered against the *merit of moral duties*, in a manner sufficient to intimidate minds

well disposed, from adding to their faith any of the virtues, lest they should commit the unpardonable sin of trusting to their own righteousness; and preference has not unfrequently been given to the state of the abandoned and profane, lest the feeble moralist who is struggling to relinquish their society, and purify himself from the mire in which they continue to be plunged, should impiously trust to the merits of his own pious efforts! Whoever contemplates the nature of absolute merit, must know that it cannot be claimed by imperfect man. Nor can any one who meditates upon the nature and duration of future blessedness, be so absurd as to suppose that his attempts to obey the divine commands, can, in the strict sense of the word, *merit* the high recompense of reward; particularly when he recollects that all the means and all the powers of obedience he enjoys, are communicated by the Being whom he serves. But surely the Supreme Director has a right to dispense his choicest and unmerited blessings, upon the conditions his wisdom deems to be most proper; nor can we conceive of terms more worthy of the deity, than the possession of those moral qualities which are essential to human happiness! Surely a compliance with these terms must give a title to the stipulated recompense, notwithstanding the immense disproportion between the service and the remuneration. The man who is conscientious in the discharge of his duty, is certainly a more exalted character, is better prepared for happiness, and has a superior title to the enjoyment of it, than the impious, negligent and inattentive; and although he renounce every claim to absolute merit, he ought to feel more inward satisfaction and self-complacency than the wicked. These

Exclaimers make no distinction between the satisfaction which accompanies conscious integrity, and the arrogance of a boasting Pharisee. Were they to scrutinize their own hearts with half the anxiety they express for the hearts of others, they might perhaps discover some degree of vanity blended with their indiscriminate censures; they might perceive that their hopes of acceptance with heaven, may in no small degree depend *upon the very merit of disclaiming merit*.

Note F.

After "To his guilty employer." Page 191.

The german traveller, Archenholtz, presents us with a striking instance of the influence of this principle in a professed assassin. In his account of Italy, he tells us, that two Venetian noblemen having quarrelled, the one immediately engaged a celebrated agent of revenge to dispatch his antagonist, giving a minute description of his person and of the places he frequented at certain hours. The devoted victim, prompted by a similar spirit of malignancy, applied to the same assassin with a view to bribe him to execute his horrid purpose. The assassin recognized him, expressed deep regret that he was pre-engaged; adding that *as a man of honour*, he was compelled immediately to execute his commission; and he stabbed the applicant to the heart.

Note G.

After "with all the cordiality of friendship." Page 226.

There is seated in the principles of infidelity, a predisposing cause of a cruel indifference to human welfare. For although cultivated minds may be useful and ornamental members of society, in spite of their speculative opinions, atheists will, generally speaking, be extremely prone to throw off every restraint, and seek to derive every possible advantage from their principles. They are most liable to unite in their own persons the two contrarieties, of great indifference to life with inordinate self-love. If they be placed in unpleasant situations; they will, without much scruple, pursue all the means of escape in their power. Their last resort may be an act of suicide, but if they can prolong existence with any degree of advantage, by the injury, or even the destruction of others, they will naturally prefer it. The indifference they feel for their own lives, compared with the sentiments of the man who considers the present as having an important relation to a better state, will dispose them to be indifferent about the life of another man, when it may suit their convenience. We may further observe, that we always place a value upon objects, in proportion to our perceptions of their qualities, powers, capacities, either of possessing, or of communicating good. The more exalted the object, the more deeply are we interested in its concerns. This rule pervades every department in nature. The life of an insect is of equal value to itself, with

the life of the nobler quadruped, yet we view the destruction of each with unequal sensations. In human society, our sympathy is much stronger when a catastrophe befals a man of eminence, than for an illiterate and obscure peasant. Whoever entertains such a humiliating opinion of human nature, as to imagine that it is destined to perish in the manner of brutes, will not consider the existence of man of much greater importance. He knows that life is of short duration; he is disposed to believe it to be worse than insignificant, and he will be disposed to treat it accordingly. The *religious man* feels his own dignity, perceives the high importance of his own existence, and ascribes equal dignity and importance to the nature and existence of his fellow immortals. He considers life as an invaluable treasure, and he is struck with horror at its being extinguished by an act of violence.

Note H.

After "is able to lay the strongest hold upon self-interest." Page 233.

There is a passage in the Cyropedia of Xenophon, which represents the superior strength of dread to every other emotion, in a manner so perfectly consonant with our statement in the text, and illustrative of its principles, that we shall translate it for the english reader.

"Tigranes, the son of Armenius, in pleading with Cyrus in behalf of his father, who was captured in a revolt from the Medes, and according to the laws of war was

liable to the punishment of death; urged that his father had already suffered by the captivity of his whole family, and having the prospect of death before him, sufficiently to teach him wisdom for the future, if Cyrus would generously spare his life. Cyrus asserted that his punishment was not yet commenced. To which Tigranes answers, "Can any one be more severely punished than by excessive fear? Do you not know that those who have been desperately wounded by the sword of their adversaries, may still be eager to renew the combat; while those who are struck with a panic never dare to look the enemy in the face again?" CYRUS. "Thus you say that the fear of punishment is the severest of chastisements?" TIGRANES. "You know that I speak the truth. You know that persons who are under the dreadful apprehensions of banishment from their country; or who are compelled to engage in battle with the expectation of being subdued, are almost lifeless from anxiety. Navigators who are in danger of drowning, and those who fear servitude and chains, can neither eat nor sleep, through the sensation of fear. But such as are already banished, or subdued, or in servitude, frequently eat and sleep, better than persons who enjoy much better fortune. Many captives have died through the fear of death; nay they have laid violent hands upon themselves, to escape the punishment. So terrible is fear, and such is the dominion it exercises over the human mind."*

* Xenoph. Cyrop. Edit. Leunclav. Amel. Βιβλ. γ.

After "And thus are they secured from further injuries."
Page 248.

As the preceding passage illustrates what we have advanced concerning Fear; the following extract from Mr. Jefferson's speech to the American congress in Nov. 1808; will prove that what has been alleged concerning the natural progress of civilization, and the gradual introduction of the true principles of equity, in place of the partial views of clans and tribes, is not merely theoretical, but a pleasing reality.

"With our Indian neighbours the public peace is steadily maintained. Some instances of individual wrongs have, as at other times, taken place, but in no wise implicating the will of the nation. Beyond the Missisippi, the Joways, the Saes, and the Alibamus have delivered up for trial and punishment individuals from among themselves, accused of murdering citizens of the united states. On this side the Missisippi the Creeks are exerting themselves to arrest offenders of the same kind; and the Choctaws have manifested their readiness and desire for amicable and just arrangements, respecting depredations committed by disorderly persons of their tribe; and generally from a conviction that we consider them as a part of ourselves, and cherish with sincerity their rights and interests; and the attachment of the Indian tribes is daily gaining strength; is extending from the nearer to the more remote, and will amply requite us for the justice and friendship practised towards them."

ERRATA.

Page 109 l. 9 for inventive, r. invective.
112 l. 10 after condemnation, r. are indulged.
191 in the reference for C. r. F.

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